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# The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church CATHOLICATE OF THE EAST 

BASELIOS MARTHOMA MATHEWS III
CATHOLICOS OF
THE APOSTOLIC THRONE OF
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AND MALANKARA METROPOLITAN


CATHOLICATE PALACE KOTTAYAM - 686004 KERALA, INDIA

ஜற్మவهி 18, 2023


























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## Fr．Dr．O．Thomas

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# Deification of Human Beings and Humanization of the World; Paulos Mar Gregorios' Vision Therapy 



Fr. Dr. Bijesh Philip

B irth anniversaries of great personalities are observed with high regard in India and such days are set apart as holidays too. Instead of giving a holiday on such occasions, what is essential is to organize a special programme in our educational institutions to enlighten the new generations about the life and contributions of these distinguished personalities. A remarkable international seminar on the life and major teachings of the extraordinarily gifted and multifaceted personality, H.G. Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios of blessed memory was held at the Orthodox Theological Seminary from August 9-10, 2022. The Orthodox Christian Churches usually commemorate the death anniversary of its prelates and the faithful in a big way, but are reluctant to celebrate birth anniversaries. However it seems to be relevant and reasonable to celebrate at least the birth-centenary of a unique personality like Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios, to enlighten the present generations about his vision therapy for human fulfillment and for a just and peaceful world.

Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios (1922-1996) is quite a familiar name in the international theological and ecumenical circles. The life and contribution of this exemplary Indian Theologian of the $20^{\text {th }}$ century, a versatile genius who could shine as an ecumenist, philosopher, educationist, theologian and bishop, is well known to many educated and spiritual leaders of even other religions and also to secular scholars.

Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios (Paul Varghese) was born in Kerala, India on August 9, 1922. His theological education was mainly in United States. He served as the Personal Advisor and Assistant of Hailie Salassie, Emperor of Ethiopia from 1956-58. He served as Associate General Secretary of WCC from 1962-67. He was ordained

as priest in the Indian Orthodox Church in 1961 and elevated as a bishop in 1975. He took charge of the newly formed Diocese of Delhi, a position he held until his demise on 24 November 1996. He served as the Principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam for a relatively long time. He served the World Council of Churches in various capacities for many decades and was one of its Presidents from 1983-91. He chaired the famous World Conference on Faith, Science and the Future held at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA in 1979. He was the Vice-President of the Christian Peace Conference (1970-90). He also served as the President of the Indian Philosophical Congress for a term. He did his Doctoral studies in Oxford and Muenster in Germany and received his Doctorate in Theology from the Serampore University. His doctoral work, later published as Cosmic Man is on the theology of the $4^{\text {th }}$ century father St. Gregory of Nyssa.

Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios was a multifaceted personality. As Dr. Joseph EThomas
rightly observes "Dr. Mar Gregorios turned into a child when he was with children, and a philosopher, scientist, or king when in the company of the elite ones." He could relate easily with his international friends like the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, Dr. Robert Runcie (Archbishop of Canterbury), Pope John Paul I, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Baba Virza Singhji Maharaj, (Delhi), Swami Chidanand Saraswathi (Rishikesh), Maulana Abdul Hasan Ali Miyan (Lucknow), Lokeswaranada (Ramakrishna Mission), Dr. Karan Singh, R Venkatraman (former President of India) At the same time he used to rejoice while conversing and playing with children.

PaulosMar Gregorios was undoubtedly a jack-of-all-trades and his knowledge extended over numerous fields of knowledge. The basic sources of his theologizing can be listed as follows:

1. Christian Theology: He had deep knowledge in the Bible, Patristics, Modern Christian writers, Church History, especially that of Orthodox Churches, Liturgy etc. He has used 'Patrology' very well in his theologizing and especially the theology of St. Gregory of Nyssa.
2. Philosophy: His deep understanding of eastern and western philosophy is the reason for the depth of his profound insights.
3. Other Religions: His knowledge of almost all major religions is evident from many of his works. In addition to Christianity, he seems to be an expertespecially in Hinduism and Buddhism.
4. Secularism with its products like Science and Technology, Education, Market Economy and Socialism or Marxism: His work on European enlightenment A Light Too Bright- The Enlightenment Today is a good critical analysis of modernism. His works Science for Sane Societies and Science and Our Future, articulates his proficiency in modern science and its philosophy. His book Holistic Healing reveals that he was fully aware of the drawbacks of the modern medicine also.
5. Worldwide travel and Ecumenical exposure.
6. Exposure to various cultures through languages: In addition to a few Indian languages
and English, Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios learned Biblical, Classical and Patristic Greek, Latin, Spanish, French, German, Italian and Portuguese, Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Amharic etc. which opened the doors to various modern and ancient cultures. All these sources contributed to develop a sound anthropology and vision of Global Peace. But Mar Gregorios confesses that God is the ultimate source of everything good in him: "I want to acknowledge freely that whatever little good there has been in me and in my words and acts, has come entirely from Him, for He is the source of all good and I recognize Him as such." ${ }^{1}$

Paulos Mar Gregorios was an accomplished doctor who worked hard to heal the church and society through a vision therapy. He shrewdly examined the modern world, diagnosed its ailments, and prescribed medicines for the restoration of its health. He wanted to make the church a healing presence in the world. As any other early Christian, Paulos Mar Gregorios' theological therapy was successful in developing a healthy faith in the faithful of the Church especially the new generations and in contributing towards a just and peaceful world.

Due to St. Augustine's theological influence, Christian teaching overemphasized the sinfulness of man which became a matter of ridicule in modern literature, art and films. By making use of the vision of St. Gregory of Nyssa who was a contemporary of Augustine in the fourth century, Paulos Mar Gregorios attempted effectively to affirm the basic goodness of humans who were created in God's own image. He discards the 'original sin' concept that teaches the transmission of sin as such from generation to generation. His endeavor was to draw the attention of the church and society to the tremendous human potentiality to be good like God.

Being created in God's image, humans need to be free as God is free. Mar Gregorios understood freedom as freedom from enslaving personal sins, liberation from socio-economic oppression, freedom from parochialism or fanaticism, and the boldness to worship God and

to do good without any compulsion as God is doing good. For him salvation is not mere freedom from personal evil but it includes deification which means humanization. In this process of becoming fully human in communion with God, humans become the presence of God and contribute creatively and radically to the shaping of the world.

While appreciating the contributions of the secular world, he could draw our attention very convincingly to the negativities of modernism which is centered around human reason. Modernism or secularism has limited the vision of many to this material world and blinded them to see the spiritual dimension of it. He took it as a lifelong commitment to struggle against the ideology of secularism, which held this world as self-existent and God as only a hypothesis. This trend encouraged the decline of faith, marginalization of religions in society and promoted selfishness and exploitation of the creation. He is inspiring many through this therapy to address the threat hidden in modernism and to uphold, without any reservation, faith and worship, which are essential for the humanization of the world. He strongly believes that secular ideology is an impotent and irrelevant remedy for the issue of religious conflicts or communalism.

keeping a steadfast loyalty to one's particular faith. Ecclesiology and Wider Ecumenism seem to be inseparable in his thought. Dialogue of the nations alone will not bring about the unity of human race. So Gregorios strongly recommends a dialogue of religions: "This is my dream that religions are constantly in touch with each other, not only to dialogue, but also to see how the unity and the peace of humanity could be maintained and how the religions could provide a different basis for transcending national loyalties than the transnational

Mar Gregorios' sincerity in ecumenism of churches is commendable. His strenuous efforts to reconcile the divided orthodox families of Byzantine Orthodox Churches and Oriental Orthodox Churches is always an inspiring model for all who dream to heal the wounds of church divisions and politics.

Paulos Mar Gregorios encourages the church to overcome its ghetto mentality and to listen to other religions to know God's presence and work in other communities. Fostering fellowship with other religions and secular world is not merely to build up a peaceful world through dialogues but also to address various life negating threats jointly and thus to build a just world.

Along with worship and evangelization, committed service to build a just and peaceful world is also a very significant duty of the church in Gregorian thought. Overcoming the exclusive approach of the theologians like Kraemer and Karl Barth and transcending the assimilating approach of theologians like Karl Rahner and Raymon Panikkar, he calls for a dialogue among religions for peace and welfare of the world while
corporation. ${ }^{2}$ He visualizes inter religious dialogue at three basic levels. a) dialogue on common social or economic problems and about common projects and practical collaboration b) dialogue on the theoretical and theological aspects of religions; c) dialogue in which a) and b) are transcended into the realm of entering into each other's spiritual experience and group worship.

He was very much concerned about the rise of fundamentalism especially in India towards the end of his life. As per his understanding, fundamentalism refers to religious intransigence, intolerance, fanaticism and extremism. Misuse of religion by its own people is one of the roots of fundamentalism which breeds communal conflicts. As Paulos Mar Gregorios puts it clearly, "the problem is not the simple mixing of religion and politics as such, but the horrid marriage of decadent religion and rotten politics. ${ }^{\prime 3}$ For him politician's misuse of religious sentiments, the larger role of religious leadership in political activity and the mounting social insecurity and economic injustice are the breeding grounds of religious fanaticism. ${ }^{4}$ Advising Indian Christians
to overcome parochialism and to be committed to the harmony of India he writes: "We as Indian Christians should assume a pioneering role in breaking down the walls of parochialism, regionalism and linguism which are tearing our country apart. As Christians we stand loyal to the unity of mankind, to the equal dignity of all men before God and for a broad universal concern, which cannot be constricted within narrow sectarian limits. If the Christian Church itself becomes socially exclusivistic, it will not be able to fulfill its function of consecrating the whole of society." ${ }^{5}$

Paulos Gregorios maintains a healthy balance between his openness and steadfastness to Christian faith. Thus he gives an orientation to have an authentic Christian faith being free from the extremes of fanaticism and liberalism. In Gregorian thought inter religious dialogue and evangelization are not contradictory but two important tasks of the Church. Through his life and teaching he proved that one can be an authentic Christian without compromising faith and also without being fanatic.

Paulos Mar Gregorios is one of the pioneer theologians who struggled hard to bring up a theology for a sustainable eco-system. His ecotheology is primarily a creation theology. Based on the biblical doctrine of creation and eastern orthodox theology, especially that of Gregory of Nyssa, Paulos Mar Gregorios develops a sound eco-theology which can address the environmental crisis successfully. His famous book 'The Human Presence' exclusively deals with this subject. He upheld the conviction that being created by God, this universe is sacred; that human beings are integral to creation, and that the basic calling of humans is to be God's compassionate and sanctifying presence in this world. His eco- theological insights encourage us to participate in the liberation struggle for a sustainable environment and restoration of justice to the victims of the environmental threats and also to adopt an alternate simple life style.

Mar Gregorios contributed a lot to the humanization of the secular world. He recommends that the so called secular world with its science, technology, politics, medicine, education etc. must have the humility to make use of the rich heritage of the religions of humankind. He was serving as a broker of a marriage: a union of the so-called sacred and secular world, faith and science, religious heritage and scientific disciplines. He exposed the hijacking of science and technology by the business world and weapon industries and military for the fulfillment of their unjust purposes. He fought for the liberation of science and technology so that they could be used properly to address the issues of poverty, diseases, ecological issues, war and violence.

Paulos Mar Gregorios' spiritual vision was not exclusively a devotion to God. It was primarily an inspiration to be committed to the welfare of this world by being in constant communion with God. His holistic approach motivated him to be dedicated to serve the world by giving it a convincing vision of humanization. He worked hard to promote communal harmony, nuclear disarmament, end of western imperialism, holistic healing, use of science and technology for a just society, just participation of women in church, etc. This cosmic doctor who gave a vision therapy to thousands of world leaders continues to serve, even after his demise, as an exponent of harmony and peace and humanization of the so called secular world.

## Endnotes

${ }^{1}$ Paulos Mar Gregorios, Love's Freedom The Grand Mystery, 14\& 15
2 Mar Gregorios, Religion and Dialogue,224.
3 Mar Gregorios, The Secular Ideology, 40.
4 Mar Gregorios, The Secular Ideology, 45-48.
5 Fr. Paul Verghese (Mar Gregorios), "Is Christianity a Western Religion?" P. 47 (kept in Archives, OTS, Kottayam)

## CHRISTOLOGYASNARRATED BYPAULOSMARGREGORIOS ANINTRODUCTION



Rev. Sam Koshy
(Marthoma Church)

F rom the early centuries of the church, Christology has been a focal point of consensus among various sections of Christians, confusion among scholars and commitment for the monks. The same is true as in the case of the theological landscape of the twentieth century. Among the Indian Christian theologians and among the global ecumenical theologians of twentieth century, Paulos Mar Gregorios ${ }^{1}$ stands out as a luminary figure in the Christological conversations. From his doctoral thesis Cosmic Man to the collection of theological essays titled as A Human God, one may note that a Christological thread runs through the deliberations. Even though, Trinitarian understanding was the foundation for PMG, yet one can decipher that the Christological axiom played a vital role in his writings.

Scholarly projects on the writings of PMG, have dealt with regard to the Science and Faith dialogue, Critique of Modernity, Ecumenism and Orthodoxy, the problematic nature of secularism and the vision of Sacramental humanism. Instead, this article is intended to serve as an introduction to the Christological thinking of PMG. Even though, PMG has dealt many aspects of Christology - perils of Secular Christology, Enlightenment Christology of Hegel, genres of Gnostic Christology- here we are dealing with the key question that how Christology served as the epistemic center for all the endeavors of PMG. Few aspects in this regard will be dealt with three aspects of Christology of PMG, as a teacher to beckon more detailed studies: namely, deeply personal realm of Christology, eucharistic Christology and Ecumenical Christology.

## 1. Deeply personal realm of Christology.

At the age of Seventy-three, PMG has written an essay titled as 'My Own Vision of the Ultimate: Why I am an Eastern Orthodox Christian?'. ${ }^{2,3}$ In this autobiographical essay PMG depicts many shades of his faith. As in the case of early monks and spiritual fathers, PMG takes this note into deeply personal conviction of the Ultimate and the Cosmic. In this essay, interestingly, it can be argued that the key passage is on Christology.

## PMG writes

'The created order came into being through the Son; he became the Son of Humanity, part of human destiny and destiny of the created order,
sharing our kind of peace and joy, and also our kind of pain and suffering. Him I adore; Him I love; He is neither male or female, though I use male personal pronoun in the English Language. His I am, and that is my fulfillment. I trust in Him; He is my hope, my compass and my anchor. He is the destiny of the created order. ${ }^{4}$

In the above given passage PMG, crystallizes his faith based on profound Christology. The Son is the reason behind the created order, and the Son participates in the experiences of the creation. But PMG, in this passage, does not account Son as an axis point for pedantic explorations. As an easterner, PMG moves to adoration and love as the fundamental act. Adoration or giving glory to God the Son, in the Holy Trinity, is the basic act and highest act of theology. Adoration leads to the experience being the loved by God and loving God. In the love of God or being experiencing the love of God, one can feel the owning of God. Christ as the owner and author of one's self is the deepest regard. And this deep personal regard for Christ turns out to be the source of trust and hope in this world of hopelessness and unstable relations. PMG goes on to teach us that our regard and relation to Christ should be the map and guideline for earthly sojourn. And this conviction is also because of the reason that Christ guides the entire cosmos to the divine fulfillment and fullness of creation which God has intended.

But one should be careful to keep in mind that PMG understood person not as isolated individual, instead person in communion with the visible and the invisible world. PMG makes this clear in the phrase that 'Christian personal life is not an individual matter, but the work of the Holy Spirit in the community of faith'. ${ }^{5}$ The communitarian dimension of faith is pivotal in the exposition of Christology too. But deeply personal dimension of Christology in the PMG writings should be considered as the pioneer ontotheological talk ${ }^{6}$ in Indian Christian theology. As envisaged by Lacoste, liturgy is opposed to the autonomous modern individual, encounter the limits of its endeavor, and the liturgical experince
undo and redo the modern autonomous individual to an awareness that the signification of this experince is no longer in its own power. ${ }^{7}$ PMG finds his personal faith and social commitment, and cosmic responsibility are all integrated well and inspired by the liturgical experince and exposure. The liturgical experience and exposure have laid the foundation for the Eucharistic Christology which is the topic in the next section.

## 2. Eucharistic Christology

Liturgical spirituality served as the cradle for the theological vision of PMG. Liturgical hermeneutics provided the strength for PMG to counter the wrong notions of philosophy of modernity and its expression in most of the theology of the West. freedom as proposed sacramental humanism proposed by PMG in the later half of his writings.

As an eastern Christian theologian who brings theology and prayer together in liturgy, PMG said
"The experience of Eucharist was a way of experiencing the second level of mystery-i.e. the incarnation of Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God inside the limits of finite human existence. It is in the community's being united to the crucified and risen Lord that its members are able to transcend the limits of finitude and to become established in the source and destiny of their existence. The incarnation is not just a historical event, to be analyzed and understood by the finite categories of the historical method. It is a mystery in which the Church participates now, not simply an event that happened then. By the mystery, I mean an enabling participation in Ultimate reality transcending the categories of finite existence." ${ }^{8}$

Incarnation of the Son of God is the mystery, church is invited to participate in Church participates in the mystery of the incarnate Son of God by the eucharistic liturgy. PMG is very critical of the debates like Jesus of History Vs Christ of Faith, Myth of God Incarnate by John Hick and the like. PMG considers these endeavors as mistaken theologies, which, mostly conditioned and controlled by preoccupation with

the historical mind and method. Instead, for the church , PMG believes, Incarnation of the Son of God is the reality here and now. This here and now dimension of the Ultimate reality and participation in it through the Eucharist makes it possible for the humanity and the cosmos to transform and to transcend the finitude. Thus, participation in the Eucharist as the here and now experince of the Incarnate Son of God, make the church worthy to become children of God and subsequently as the servant of God. As the servants of God, church is called to participate and lead the endeavors of peace, reconciliation, justice and unity. Ecumenical journey, as a witness of the servants of God, is an expression of Christology of PMG.

## 3. Ecumenical Christology

Rootedness to one's own tradition and openness to others without compromising either one and the same time mutually enriching each other was the unique brilliance of PMG. One may note that, therefore, PMG was able to appreciate monks in the remote deserts of Egypt and the Dalai Lama of Buddhist tradition with equal respect. For such rare and unfamiliar blends, many times, PMG has been criticized by people who is comfortable with the cocoon of anyone tribe. The manyness in the spiritual journey of PMG is best evident in the ecumenical engagements of PMG. Any who study, global ecumenical movement in the 1960 onwards can very well note the presence and poignant leadership of PMG in many lead
conferences like Faith and Science conference at MIT and Pro Oriente conversation at Vienna and many lead assemblies of World Council of Churches. At the same time PMG found time to initiate and guide local ecumenical attempts like FFRRC, and Mar Thoma -Orthodox dialogue. But, all these ecumenical steps can be better interpreted if one can study the connection of Christology and Ecumenism in PMG.

Here are the three main aspects in which PMG finds epistemic axis in Christology for Ecumenism.

## 1.Unity in Christ is dynamic and eschatological -

"Unity is a reality within history, given by Christ in his Holy Spirit through specific means in a visible and historical community. It is not static, given once for all, perfect. It is a unity which grows, which has to be attained, It is a dynamic process until 'until we have attained the unity of faith and the stature of humanity conforming us to the full-grown stature of Christ.' .... the mystery of unity given, on the one hand and on the other, the striving in repentance toward that full unity which is to be revealed at the second coming of Christ." ${ }^{9}$

## 2.Unity is not uniformity but symphony in Christ-

"Responsive to the voice of the Spirit, they (churches) have to avoid rivalry and the spirit of domination in maintaining their equal dignity in

Christ. Such common life will permit each of these churches, within the historical territory given to them to strike roots deep into the culture of their people and aid in its full flowering injustice and freedom. The local church quickened by the gifts of the Spirit and by their loyalty to the Lord, should remain open, listening to others and receptive to all human creativity." 10

## 3.Unity is not possible through liberal secular framework

PMG as a critic of modernity was definite to state that "I suspect that a secular, liberal, humanist framework will not unite the world." ${ }^{11}$ Therefore, PMG was an inside critic of WCC and other global ecumenical bodies if it subscribes to the above-mentioned framework. Instead, PMG believed in conversation between religions and traditions and mutually correcting and pointing all to the Transcendent. But Christ was the foundation, goal and the way for PMG in the path of unity guiding and correcting the very efforts of unity.

Here one can say that the Ecumenical leadership of PMG was an expression of Christological convictions and PMG's ecumenical engagements enriched his readings on Christ much beyond the liberal view of Christianity to the deeper appreciation of biblical view such a s Christ as the pleroma of God.

## Conclusion

Paulos Mar Gregorios is theological stream to jump into. This article has been an attempt to introduce three aspects of his Christology. Christology in the wittings of PMG was a corrective to that of Bonhoeffer and Bultmann. Christology in PMG was challenge to the liberal humanist framework. Christology in PMG was alarming the church to the perils of historical reductionism in Jesus studies. Instead, PMG found Christology has the very core at the personal-ontological dimension without being fallen to idiosyncrasy of the individualism. The collective at the heuristic vision of PMG was not an ideological mob, or conglomerated crowd, rather a liturgical collective. The liturgical act, especially the Eucharist was helping the church
to participate in here and now reality of the mystery of God Incarnate. By the participation in the God Incarnate, church is invites to love, forgive, reconcile as the children of God and servants of God and this in turn gives the energy for the ecumenical acts. Hence in PMG, Eucharistic commitment and Ecumenical collaboration are not contradictory but complimentary. The profound Christological view of PMG, mostly influenced by the fourth century church fathers of the Greek speaking community, helped his eminence not to allured by secular Christology or Jesus studies, instead gives pointers for every student of theology to develop Christological thinking sensible of the Holy Trinity, sensitive to the heresies, sure of the biblical foundations and suggesting in line with the apostolic witness about Christ, the God Incarnate.

## (Footnotes)

1 Hereafter, Paulos Mar Gregorios shall be referred as PMG.
2 The Complete Works of Paulos Mar Gregorios, Gregory of India Study Centre, Sophia Books Kottayam, 2018, 458-471,
3 I wonder Why PMG opted Eastern Orthodox, despite being a member of the church of Syriac which in turn would propose Oriental orthodox.
4 The Complete Works of Paulos Mar Gregorios, Gregory of India Study Centre, Sophia Books Kottayam, 2018, 458-471,469.
5 Ibid, 471.
6 Onto theological turn considers the Ontological aspect of existence as important along with the structural aspects. This ontotheological dimension was missing in most of the theological engagements in the second half of the twentieth century.
7 Cf.Jean-Yves Lacoste Experience and the Absolute,188.
8 Paulos Mar Gregorios, A Human God, (Kottayam, India: MGF, 1992), 59
9 Paulos Mar Gregorios, A Reader,303
${ }^{10}$ Ibid, 302.
${ }^{11}$ Paulos Mar Gregorios, Religion and Dialogue, 225.

# Humanity in the writings of Paulos Mar Gregorios: A Posthuman Appraisal 

## (Abridged form of the paper presented on the 100th Birth Anniversary International Seminar on Paulos Mar Gregorios, August 9-10 at Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam)



Rev. Shiby Varughese
(Marthoma Church)

Paulos Mar Gregorius often titled as the outstanding scholar, theologian, polyglot and man of letters is an ecclesiastical leader, the ecumenical giant, the eclectic philosopher, eastern theologian and exuberant scientist who has penetrated our minds and provoked our thoughts in a multidimensional way. The spirit of Mar Gregorios haunts our theological journey in every sense of its construction. His thoughts encompassed all areas of theological discourse both eastern and western. Worshiping God, preaching and proclaiming the word of God, teaching the word and analysing the philosophical and theological treatises and conversing with scientist were the essence of Gregorian thought world.

The importance of Mar Gregorios theology for understanding 'human' in a posthuman world is briefly outlined in this presentation. Though this manuscript delves into the thought world of Paulos Mar Gregorios, I hereby state that it is limited to the study of certain concepts and categories presented in Cosmic Man, Human God, Human Presence and Science, Technology and Future of Humanity.

Mar Gregorios in the Cosmic Man seeks to analyse the problem of human existence between its two poles, God and the Creation. To explore the existence of human in relation between God and Creation, Mar Gregorios interprets the writings of one of the 4th century Christian thinker, Gregory of Nyssa, born around 330 A.D. and deceased around 395 A.D.

The first part of Cosmic Man presents the epistemological grounds and the second part presents the ontological proposals. The epistemological discussion starts with the background of the 4th century theological debate between Eunomius and the Cappadocians. It then lifts up two major epistemological principles in Gregory's thought - epinoia (human-beings are endowed with the capacity to conceptualise and to create which Gregory of Nyssa calls this capacity epinoia) and
akolouthia, in relation to the Christian Scriptures. The second part deals with the dialectic between diastema / discontinuity and metousia / continuity. The key concept of pleroma is also then analysed, in relation to sinful human existence in history. On the whole, however, the effort is to present the thought of Gregory of Nyssa as a valid alternative and necessary corrective to the current or historical ways of western theologizing.

Mar Gregorios examines humanity's two basic relationships - to the source and ground of its being on the one hand, and to the created world in which humanity is placed on the other. According to Mar Gregorios, any attempt to separate humanity from the relationship of God and the world, in a totally secular sense, as if Man and the World were the only two realities with which we have to deal is a theological absurdity.

Mar Gregorios prescribes to a structural framework which is so decisive for the perception of human reality without ignoring the two poles namely God and Creation. The questions to find a suitable position to human existence as inclusive to nature or exclusive to nature is the search of ecological thinkers of our times. Mar Gregorios finds that the cosmological and anthropological structural framework is so necessary to situate human in history. The position of human made a paradigm shift form the medieval thought to the modern thought.

## Modern Science and Future of Humanity

Mar Gregorios presents different views about science which capture the future of humanity. It is commonly believed that science and technology are potentially capable of solving all the problems of humankind. Modern scientific worldview dethroned human from the two poles of relationships and crowned with the "objective" nature and "autonomous" thinking human. Mar Gregorios comments that the dethroning of human into certain edges has de-sanctified and secularized our thoughts to be controlled by science and technology.

Science and technology alienated the position of human from the nature which resulted in the perspectival changes in understanding cosmos
and learning of new language words substituted by modern science. But it is true that the dogmatic scientism once ruled our life has become outdated. In certain advanced industrial societies, there is totally irrational counter-cultural syndrome in which science is wedded with mysticism and art to produce a revolution of consciousness which restores the "sacramental vision of nature" to science. ${ }^{1}$

The following questions raised by Mar Gregorios is important in this juncture. Does science promote an ethos where people assume that existence as well as evolution stands "outside" or "underneath" existence and evolution? Do scientists with a Christian faith manage to find an intellectually satisfactory meaning for the doctrine of creation and creator-creation relationship?

## Analysis of Modern Humanisms

Modernity is understood by Mar Gregorios as the celebration of liberalism or liberal humanism. Humanism believes that full development of man is possible. Liberalism claims liberty from dogmas and tradition. The immediate concern of liberalism is to deal with human existence here and now. Its primary aim is to deal with personal freedom and dignity of the individual, the course of justice and freedom to dissent. Socialist humanism according to Mar Gregorios is built on the strong Marxist theoretical analysis of societies. Mar Gregorios finds some dogmatic streams in the fundamental assumptions of Marxist ideology when it clearly presents the dialectical materialism as a competitive system of thought. Marxist thought without any scepticism believes in a utopia that humanity will attain a classless society in history. Mar Gregorios highly critique these Marxist fundamentalist outlooks.

Secular humanism according to Mar Gregoiros puts man at the centre, makes humanity the measure and standard of all end, purpose and goal of life and developments. The doctrine of creation which allowed human to have free dominion over the rest of the creation is a mistaken understanding. Humanity has the responsibility but not the master of the creator order. The destruction of inter-connectedness and interdependency has isolated the humanity. Secular-
ism has made an impact in presenting an alternative to the dichotomic worldview.

## Christian Approach on Humanity

Mar Gregorios presents two interesting Christian approaches to anthropology. They are St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Gregory of Nyssa. Augustine regarded evil himself as central to human nature. Humanity is thus mis-oriented in his free will by his passions or desires. Desire precedes thought and thoughts are guided by passions. Desires of the flesh is against the spirit and the desires of the spirit is against the flesh. According to Augustine fallen human nature is decisively normative for understanding man. In Augustine, nature is the result of the Fall, not of creation. Henceforth in western Christian anthropology man is a sinner by nature. Mar Gregorios comments that this ontological explanation of St Augustine has plagued western Christianity.

According to Mar Gregorios a theological correction to Augustine can come from his cotemporary St. Gregory of Nyssa. Human is an integral part of creation and cannot be seen in isolation from the rest of creation. Human is inseparable entity of mind, body and senses. Human is created in the image of God and nature of human is divine. Human can freely participate in all goodness. There is no limit to human potentiality to do good. Sin is extrinsic to human nature. Human is creative and expression of freedom originates from the necessity to do good. Human is a historical being having the potentiality for constant change. Human in fundamental essence is corporate and vocation is therefore be a part of corporate body -the body of Christ. Human in the image of God transcends all determinants physical, psychological, moral or conceptual. God is free in His immanent relations to the cosmos and to human. The choice of human is to participate in the very nature of God. Thus, according to Mar Gregorios, humanization is an effort to join the one single movement of history towards point Omega.

## Posthuman Condition: Beyond Humanism

Humanism is a broad category of ethical philosophies that affirm the dignity and worth of all
people, based on the ability to determine right and wrong by appeal to universal human qualities - particularly rationality. It is a component of a variety of more specific philosophical systems and is incorporated into several religious schools of thought. Humanism entails a commitment to the search for truth and morality through human means in support of human interests.

Rosi Braidotti presents the concept of 'posthumanism' as a systematic attempt to challenge humanist assumptions underlying the construction of 'the human'. The term "posthumanism" itself seems to have worked its way into contemporary critical discourse in the humanities and social sciences during the mid1990s.

Donna Haraway presents a feminist posthuman theory, centres the cyborg, a humanmachine hybrid. The cyborg represents the denial of social categories, straddling the line between human and machine. Cyborg becomes a symbol for the rejection of gender essentialism, or any totalizing identity. As a counter thought to cyborg, Haraway proposes a "sacramental materialism" where the divine permeates the material, and it is a visible sign of God's grace. Haraway's resistance to the separation of the material and the semiotic can be seen as the philosophical result of a sacramentalism that accepts the material instantiation of the symbolic and sacred.

The culmination of a complete posthumanism is, indeed, the adaptation of common consciousness, the pouring out of oneself and the cancellation of one's own ego. The true power of the posthumanist thought consists in rediscovering some purely human needs and desires: the pursuit of eternity and immortality, the desire of perfection, the need to open up to otherness and to live in harmony with other living beings, the need to know that we are part of a single cosmos.

## (Footnotes)

1 Paulos Mar Gregorios Science, Technology and the Future of Humanity (Kottayam: ISPCK \& MGF, 2007), 35.


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# Are Jews rejected from the Kingdom of God? 

## Bible Study: Romans 11:1-35

The Great Lent and Passion Week services bring a lot of anti-Jewish sentiments in to our mind. This is true of all the Christian churches. Those who spend a whole day in the Church on Good Friday come out with an attitude of vengeance towards the Jews, who are called as "Christ Killers". Even while objecting to the atrocities which the Israelis commit against the Palestinians the question is still valid: What is the theology of Jews, the chosen race of God? During the Passion Week of a couple of years back I was going through the three chapters of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans (Chs. 9-11). These chapters deal with a variety of topics about the future of the Israelites as a people. St. Paul's question is: Can Israelites still hope about their salvation? One who participates in the Passion Week services, let it be Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox, may usually say: No. But let us ask the question once again after reading Romans 11:1-35.

The Good Friday prayers in the context of AntiSemitism

The Passion Week services bring a lot of people to our churches. Even though Easter is consid-
ered to be the greatest feast of the Orthodox Church, the Indians prefer the Good Friday service to that of the Easter. Neither the length of the service nor the strict fasting on that day, which are otherwise stumbling blocks to the Orthodox service for many believers, is seen as a hurdle for the attendees. I think there are some psychological reasons for the increasing number of participants in Good Friday services.

Firstly, people like to sympathize with Jesus, whose troubles are explained in detail through the prayers and songs of that day. Along with this there is a second and more important psychological factor which motivates the believers to come to the Church on Good Friday. Normally our worship services are occasions for recognizing our faults and making repentance for them. But what happens on Good Friday is not this; the Bible readings, prayers and songs of that day contain accusations against our common enemy, who is the Jews. To accuse or blame somebody for the mistakes of the world is a matter of satisfaction or even enjoyment for human beings. Perhaps we had inherited this tendency from our ancestors Adam and Eve. Instead of accepting their faults they had pointed their fingers on oth-

ers for what had happened. Ultimately God Himself did become an object of Adam's accusation, because He created the woman and the serpent.

It was a convenient theology that Jews should be eliminated so that God's justice is done. As a result of this Christians do not feel worried, if something bad happens to the Jewish world. This is the continuation of a long history of AntiSemitism. Not only in the Gospels but also in the Epistles of the New Testament the crucifixion of Jesus is narrated with a description about the role of the Jews in that. Let us take for example St. Paul's proclamation that the Jews "killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and drove us out, the Jews who are heedless of God's will and enemies of their fellow men..." (I Thess. 2:15-16). What we have to understand here is the objective of the apostle. Paul is not generalizing the guilt of those who rejected the prophets and who were instrumental in killing Jesus. Unfortunately, the readers of the Bible ignored the fact that the evangelists, who narrated the passion of Christ, have themselves described the events like the feeding of the five thousand, who came from the Jewish world. The most important question we have to ask is: Shall God justify the Christians, who killed numerous

Jews on behalf of Jesus?
Laws were passed throughout the Christian world to "protect" the "faithful" from Jewish "contamination" by forbidding them to eat with, do business with, or have sex with Jews, and by the sixth century, Jews were not allowed to hold public office, employ Christian servants, or even show themselves in the streets during Holy Week. The time of the Crusade was especially bloody. Entire communities of Jews were forced to choose between baptism or death, and since few Jews would renounce their faith, the First Crusade resulted in nearly 10,000 Jews being slaughtered during the first six months alone. Godfrey Bouillon, leader of the First Crusade, vowed "to leave no single member of the Jewish race alive," and ordered the synagogue in Jerusalem burned to the ground with its entire Jewish congregation trapped inside". Peter Abler, a twelfth century philosopher and priest wrote of the Jews: "Heaven is their only place of refuge. If they want to travel to the nearest town, they have to buy protection with huge sums of money from the Christian rulers who actually wish for the Jews' deaths so that the rulers can confiscate the possessions of the Jews. The Jews cannot own land or vineyards.

Thus, all that is left to them as a means of livelihood is the business of money lending, and this in turn brings the hatred of Christians upon them even more."

When the Jews refused to convert, an angry Luther wrote: "First their synagogues... should be set on fire, and whatever does not burn up should be covered or spread over with dirt so that no one may ever be able to see a cinder or stone of it. And this ought to be done for the honor of God and of Christianity in order that God may see that we are Christians... Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed... For, as has been said, God's rage is so great against them that they only become worse and worse through mild mercy, and not much better through severe mercy. Therefore away with them... To sum up, dear princes and nobles who have Jews in your domains, if this advice of mine does not suit you, then find a better one so that you and we may be free of this insufferable devilish burden ...the Jews."

Exhortations like the above got its impact fully during the II World War. Hitler mounted a powerful propaganda campaign designed and implemented by Joseph Goebbels, which blamed the Jews for Germany's many economic problems, as well as Bolshevism and the worldwide threat of Communism. Jews were put in Ghettos at first and then in concentration camps. Six million Jews were systematically tortured and massacred during the time of Hitler.

We have to go through the prayers of the Passion Week services in this context. The majority, who attends the services, asks God to take a revenge against Jews and at the same time they ask for mercy towards their own children. How can we justify these prayers? Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount that, when you call somebody "fool" or "idiot" you enter into the process of killing your enemy (Mtt5,21-22). What Jesus wants from us is the love for the enemies (Mtt5:44). He himself did not curse his enemies: rather he prayed for those who betrayed him and handed him over to the Romans for crucifixion (Lk 23:34). When he saw the women who were
weeping over his struggles he said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Lk 23:28). We also should repent and pray for ourselves and for our family instead of cursing the opponents of Jesus. The prayer that is pleasing for God is not that of self-justification and of accusation of your neighbor, but that of repentance. This is made clear in Jesus' narration of the prayers of the Pharisee and the Tax collector also (Lk 18:9-14).

St. Paul's theology of the salvation of the Jews
Let us think for a moment and ask earnestly: Do the Jews have no chance in the Kingdom of God? Or are they rejected by God once and for ever? Many Christians think and wish "yes" to these questions. This had happened in every part of the world. The holocaust stories of Nazi Germany are the most popular examples for it. When six million people were tortured and killed systematically there were not many theologians who showed a sympathetic attitude towards the Jews. Theologians like Dietrich Bonhoeffer belonged to a rare group. On the contrary, majority of Christians found in the holocaust a divine acknowledgement of the punishment for those who betrayed and crucified Jesus. Hitler was using this as a good background for his agenda of eliminating Jews from this planet. However, today theologians of all confessions underline the fact that what happened in Europe six decades back should not be repeated in the world again. Only a perverted theology can interpret the brutal measures of the concentration camps as means of God's justice.

Two questions, which need our reflection, are: a) Is it right to say that all the Jews were participating in the killing of Jesus? b) Will a person who happened to be born to Jewish parents centuries after the event be punished by God for what his ancestors did? Is it the divine justice? If we read the Gospels carefully, we can learn the fact that those who were instrumental in the death of Jesus were the Jewish leadership of that day. Both the Pharisees and Sadducees, who possessed the political as well as religious powers in those days, can be called as the real criminals. But the
common people were innocent; of course they cried aloud "crucify him". But this was just because of the pressure from the leadership. Even today common people can be misled if a leader is corrupt. For example, we can not blame all the people of Afghanistan or Iraq for what happened in their country in the last decades. So only a perverted theologian can curse Israelites, I mean the common people, for what happened two thousand years ago. The source for such a thought is nobody other than St. Paul. In the three chapters of his epistle to Romans (Chs. 9-11) Paul asks a series of questions regarding the role of Israelites in the economy of salvation. Following are the reasons for his conclusions:

Paul is of the opinion that the call and election of Israel as the People of God are not null and void after the crucifixion of Jesus. It is true that Israelites could not accept the Gospel of Christ (Rom 10:14-21). But Paul is convinced about the fact that "God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew" (Rom 11:2). What make them special are their adoption, covenants, Law etc. Moreover, God can not forget the faith of their fathers (Rom 11:28) and punish their children. However, by Israelites Paul doesn't mean all who have got racial or biological association to the folk of Israel (Rom 9:6-13); rather true Israelites are the ones who share the faith of their fathers.

The second reason for Paul's positive attitude towards the Jews is special character of God's justice. According to human justice Jews should be cast away once and for all. But God's Grace and Mercy are immeasurable and he can justify Jews with these (Rom 9:14-29). Paul uses a series of Old Testament quotations to substantiate this point and he concludes: "All day long I (God) have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people" (Rom 10:21).

The fact that Jesus himself was a Jew gives also new hopes to the Israelites (Rom 11:26). He will turn away all kinds of unbelief from his nation.

It was the covenant of God that the deliverer would come out of Zion. The faith in God and His beloved Son Jesus Christ can bring an Israelite to the fulfillment of his election.

Paul sees even a divine plan in the rejection of Christ by the Jews; it gave an opening to the gentiles of the world (Rom 11:11-18). Paul uses the parable of the farmer here. God was grafting the branch of gentiles to the root of the tree of salvation. Otherwise Israel would have been the only nation of the world loved by God. Since Israel disobeyed God, the gentiles got an entry in to the Kingdom of God.

As Indians we should be thankful to Paul for his insights. Especially the last mentioned is very important for us because otherwise our ancestors, who were gentiles of India, would not have received an opportunity to join the People of God. Therefore the Christ event should not lead us to a theology of hate and revenge. The world promotes always the hatred between the people. But God does not want His children to quarrel on behalf of him. Let us not assume the role of God and say what we do is a realization of God's justice. We should not protect God. He is able to protect Himself. We should rather agree with Paul in saying: God will not cast away His people(Rom 11:2), because "the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). All the apostles of our Lord were Jews and those who accepted Jesus during his ministry included committed Jews. We should not forget this reality. According to Paul the rejection of Israel is neither total nor final. Whoever from the Jewish folk wants to be saved has got a chance for salvation. The "remnant", who follows the faith of the ancestors and who believes in Jesus will inherit the Kingdom of God. The duty of us Indians, who do not belong to the race of Israelites biologically, is not to condemn Jews for their disobedience and wish for their devastation. Instead of that we should strive for getting an entry in to the community of the People of God.


# Anointing the Sick: The Sacrament of Wholeness 

In the letter of St. James we read, "Is anyone among you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? He should sing praises. Is there anyone who is sick? He should send for the church elders, who will pray for him and rub olive oil on him in the name of the Lord. This prayer made in faith will heal the sick person; the Lord will restore him to health. So then, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you will be healed." (5:13-16). The church, throughout the ages, has faithfully acted on this word of Scripture. The church's liturgical ministry to the sick takes the form of the sacrament of anointing. The sacrament of anointing of the sick is one of the sacraments of the church, by which the faithful sick is healed from psychological and physical disease. The priest anoints him/her by the holy oil from which he/she obtains the grace of remedy from God. Orthodoxy does not view this Sacrament as available only to those who are near death. It is offered to all who are sick in body, mind, or spirit.

Jesushimself may well have used oil in healing the sick. It was a common, natural emollient and in the parable of the Good Samaritan, he told how oil was used with wine (a good, if primitive,
disinfectant) for dressing the wounds of the traveller. Certainly, the disciples used it for anointing the sick when Jesus sent them out to preach (Mk6:13). It shows that it was a practice in Christian tradition even from the beginning of the Christian church. We find the definite instruction for the anointing of the sick by the presbyter in the Epistle of James. James was a very precise person and a methodological writer. He would choose his words with care. If we are suffering on the one hand or cheerful on the other, the answer lies in our hands. We can pray or sing praise, according to the occasion. But if we are sick, then we need the Church's ministry. Morris Maddocks, a Christian, writer said, "Christians who are sick need to make two phone calls, one to the doctor, the other to the priest/minister/ elder." The elders are commanded to pray over the sick person. It is the elders who are to be called the representatives of the Church who minister in Christ's name. Through the Sacrament of Anointing the Sick, the Church carries out Jesus' mission of compassion and healing for the sick.

Through the celebration of the sacrament of anointing, the sick person encounters our Lord himself and experiences his saving and healing

presence. When one is ill and in pain, this can very often be a time of life when one feels alone and isolated. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sickreminds us that when we are in pain, either physical, emotional, or spiritual, Christ is present with us through the ministry of his Church. He is among us to offer strength to meet the challenges of life and even the approach of death.As with Chrismation, oil is also used in this Sacrament as a sign of God's presence, strength, and forgiveness. After the reading of the epistle,the gospel and the offering of prayers, which are all devoted to healing, the priest anoints the body with the Holy Oil.

The sacrament of anointing the sick also prepares the sick person tounderstand the meaning of suffering from a Christian perspective. In the ritual for the Anointing of the Sick, the meaning of human suffering and death is explained in the light of God's salvific plan, and more specifically in the light of the salvific value of the sufferings undergone by Christ, the Incarnate Word, in the mystery of his passion,
death and resurrection. While it is possible that the sacrament could bring physical healing, Anointing of the Sick is primarily about the healing of hope and of the spirit. Above all, the sacrament allows the person who is ill to unite more closely to Christ's Passion. This gives suffering a new meaning: participation in the saving work of Jesus. This is a powerful witness that is for the good of the whole Church

An obviously beneficial element of the anointing of the sick will be the forgiveness of sins, for you cannot touch the fringe of Christ's garment and go away empty. The confession of sins and receiving of absolution is a vital part of receiving this sacrament. It is a health to our ongoing growth.Christ invites his disciples to follow him by taking up their cross in their turn (Mt 10:38). By following him they acquire a new outlook on illness and the sick.Sacred Scripture points to a close relationship between sickness and death, and $\sin$. But it would be a mistake to think of sickness as a punishment for personal sins (Jn 9:3). The meaning of innocent suffering can only
be understood by the light of faith, believing firmly in the Goodness and Wisdom of God, in his loving Providence, and contemplating the mystery of Christ's passion, death and resurrection, thanks to which the Redemption of the world became possible.

Our Lord taught us the positive value of suffering for carrying out redemption, but at the same time, he wanted to cure many sick people, showing his power over suffering and illness and, above all, his power to forgive sins (Mt9:2-7). After the resurrection he sent out his apostles: In my name ... they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover (Mk 16: 17-18). For a Christian, sickness and death can and should be a means to seek holiness and to redeem with Christ. The sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick helps us to live these sorrowful realities of human life in a Christian sense. In itself, suffering does not save or redeem. Only illness accepted with faith, hope and love for God, in union with Christ, purifies and redeems. It is Christ who saves us, not through suffering but by suffering transformed into prayer as a spiritual sacrifice, which we can offer to God, uniting ourselves to Christ's Redemptive Sacrifice, made present in each celebration of the Eucharist so that we can share in it.

This sacrament gives the grace of the Holy Spirit to those who are sick, by which 'the whole person is helped and saved. The whole person is not just a physical being. Therefore, this healing through the grace of the Holy Spirit should not be seen only in terms of physical cure but of relationship with God, the source of all beings. Healing means wholeness, and wholeness is the effect of spiritual well-being, not just physical well-being. There are incurable diseases, but there is no incurable person. That is why we can pray with absolute faith for the healing of the person. The healing of the person must always be seen as the healing of the heart; the healing of the person in his or her relationship with God and with other people; the freeing of the person's deeply buried resentments, fears and nonacceptance of God's plan in his or her life. Yet with equal faith, we must also pray for the physical healing of the person's needs. Peoplewho are sick very often suffer from tension, depression or anxiety. The gravity of the sickness cannot be measured simply in physical terms. The holy sacrament of anointing heals the mind due to the strong link between the mind and body. It is a sacrament for the health of the mind and body.



Fr. Dr. Ninan K George

# Apophatic knowledge of God as a Fundamental Element of Eastern Christian Spirituality 

## Introduction

Orthodox spirituality aims at the perfection of the faithful in Christ. This perfection can't be obtained in Christ, except by participation in His divine-human life. Therefore the goal of Orthodox spirituality is the perfection of the believer by his/her union with Christ. In this regard Common people always rely upon some existing understanding of God that evolves different theological concepts and attributes to know Him. This can be called a "theological exercise" which is an unending process in theological formulation that taking place time to time. The ultimate aim of any type of Christian theology is to translate God as a living experience in the life of people for which all are not to become the so called 'theologians'. The knowledge of God by means of the logoi of nature, of the development of human life, and of Scripture are representing the affirmative way of our knowledge of God. Eastern theologians are of the view that "in the progress of this knowledge, the consciousness that God surpasses that which can be understood about
him in concepts and words, becomes stronger and stronger, on the peak of this progress, it becomes predominant." So for a devotee, at the beginning, the affirmative way of knowledge of God seems less dependent on the consciousness of the ineffable character of God. But after a long spiritual ascent of a devotee it becomes almost totally dependent on the consciousness of the inability to comprehend and express God in concepts. This state paves the way for people's thought to use the Apophatic (negative) knowledge of God.

## Apophatic knowledge of God

For articulating the concept of Apophatic knowledge of God What I noticed is that the theologians who have developed the same are dependent on Dionysius the Areopagite who well addressed the topic in his lectures in general and his book called "The Mystical Theology In particular. They are attracted to his explanation on Apophatic knowledge of God because of the way he distinguished cataphatic or positive theology-proceeds by affirmation; the other- Apophatic or negative Theology-by nega-

tions. Here one can notice why he is very fond of the second way of the knowledge of God. He explains:

The first leads us to some knowledge of God,but in an imperfect way. The perfect way, the only way which is fitting to God, who is of His very nature unknowable is the second-which leads us finally to total ignorance. ${ }^{1}$

Ignorance doesn't refer to the lack of knowledge rather in it a "feeling" of the incomprehensibility of God is expressed. It is an experience of Him which grows along with the spiritual ascent of human beings. According to Dumitru Staniloe this experience is called a "vision" of God, or a vision of the divine light higher than any feeling. ${ }^{2}$ Almost all the Eastern Fathers have elucidated on such an "understandable feeling," of such a "vision" of God, of an "experience" of Him.

It is very interesting to note Father Georges Florovsky while reflecting on the Apophatic approach of Dionysius the Areopagite speaks of God:
"God is higher than any definition and affirmation and therefore higher than any negation...The Apophatic 'not' is the same in
meaning to 'supra' ( or' outside', 'beyond ') and signifies not limitation or exclusion, but ascent and transcendence....God is neither soul or reason, neither imagination nor opinion, neither thought nor life, he is neither word nor idea.....God is not the object of knowledge, he transcends knowing....therefore the way of knowing is the way of abstraction and negation, the way of simplicity and silence....we come to know God solely in the peace of the spirit, in the peace of unknowing. The Apophatic unknowing is rather supra-knowing- not the absence of knowledge, but perfect knowledge, and hence incommensurate with all partial unknowing. This knowing is contemplation....God is known not from a distance, nor through rational discourse about him, but through incomprehensible union with him. ${ }^{3}{ }^{3}$

The Image of Moses Surrounded in Darkness as a Symbol of God's Incomprehensibility

The Greek Fathers take Moses one of the Old Testament figures as symbol of the spiritual way. Moses received three visions of God: first he sees God in a vision of light at the burning bush (Exod. 3: 2); next God is revealed to him through mingled light and darkness, in the "pillar of cloud
and fire which accompanies the people of Israel through the desert (Exod. 13: 21); and then finally he meets God in a "non-vision", when he speaks with him in "thick darkness" at the summit of Mount Sinai (Exod. 20: 21).

Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius the Areopagite speak about the divine darkness with which Moses was surrounded as a symbol of God's incomprehensibility. Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev explains the Old Testament event as follows:

Moses encountered God, but the Israelites remained at the foot of the mountain. Only Moses could enter the darkness; having separated himself from all things, he could encounter God, who is outside everything, who is there where there is nothing. Cataphatically we can say that God is Light, but in doing so we liken God to light perceived by our senses. ${ }^{4}$

Another Biblical example is that happens to Jesus Christ as He was transfigured on Mount Tabor. It is said that 'His face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light ( Matt. 17: 2). Here the light of Tabor is the uncreated light of the Divinity that transcends all human concepts of light. Apophatically we can call the divine light the 'supra-light' or darkness. It is very interesting to say that the darkness of Sinai and the light of Tabor are one and the same.

## Divine Incomprehensibility as a Supra-conceptual Union with God

As the Eastern Church Fathers consider Mount Sinai experience of Moses as an invocation of purification, a catharsis is necessary. This is very evident in Dionysius. Vladimir Lossky quoted him as follows: "One must abandon all that is impure and even all that is pure. One must then scale the most sublime heights of sanctity leaving behind all the divine luminaries, all the heavenly sounds and words. It is only thus that one may penetrate to the darkness wherein He who is beyond all created things makes His dwelling. ${ }^{5}$ Dionysius says that Moses begins by purifying himself for his ascent on Mount Sinai. ${ }^{6}$
operation, because the experiencing of the divine Incomprehensibility doesn't require only an intellectual purification, but a renunciation of the whole created realm. It means an existential going beyond the self which engages the whole man; it is a supra-conceptual union with God. According to Dionysius the Mystical union is a new condition which implies a progress, a series of changes, a transition from the created to the uncreated, the acquiring of something which man did not hitherto possess by nature. This idea paves the way to deification. Yes, Mystical union with God means deification.

## Conclusion

In our understanding of God we often rely upon cataphatic notions because they are easier and more accessible to the mind. The way of negation (Apophatic) corresponds to the spiritual ascent into the depths of divine, where words fall silent, where reason fades, where all human knowledge and comprehension cease, where God is. It occurs not by speculative knowledge but in the depth of prayerful silence wherein the soul can encounter God, who is 'beyond everything'. God reveals himself as in-comprehensible, in-accessible, in-visible, yet at the same time as God the living person.

## (Endnotes)

1 Dumitru Staniloe. Orthodox Spirituality. Pennsylvania: STTSP, 2003, p. 231
2 See Dumitru Staniloe. Orthodox Spirituality. Pennsylvania: STTSP, 2003, p. 230
3 Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev. The Mystery of Faith. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011. P. 25.

4 Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev. The Mystery of Faith. New York: SVSP, p. 25
5 Dionysius the Areopagite. The Mystical Theol$o g y, 1.3$, Quoted by Vladimir Lossky. The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, p. 27.
6 See Dionysius the Areopagite. The Mystical Theology, 1. 3, Quoted by Vladimir Lossky. The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, p. 27.

By referring Apophaticism Vladimir Lossky doesn't mean negative theology as an intellectual


#  ancoumimmomioymz＂ 

（พ๐வை 12：7 ；ก円เゅ๐ 3：5）

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 took care of many）（几ノO．3：1－22）






















 sures of heaven rather than the treasures of this world）毋（ஸ๐．11：24－27）










 （ปృก．32：9－14）


































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 11：16 ff）Leaders need a couple of people to hold them up，




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 கழியை．


# The Pauline Use of "Еккえךбí $\alpha$ " as an Identity Construct 

### 1.0 Introduction

Among the many concerns regarding the scholarship of $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma$ 'í $\alpha$ (Ecclesia), its Pauline use always remained a major challenge. The $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha a$ has been emphasised in its representations, where the $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha$ is a community and fellowship of people who share a similar religion, worship, and love, as well as a loyalty to Jesus Christ, the head. The pictures of $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha \alpha$ in Pauline usage, especially Ephesians are concerned with the church's identity. The unmistakable identity of غ́ккえ $\eta \sigma$ í $\alpha$ 's membership, shown through imagery, reenergizes the audience's love, desire for unity, witness, and worship.

### 2.0 The Evolution of Екк $\boldsymbol{\eta} \boldsymbol{\sigma} \boldsymbol{\sigma} \boldsymbol{\alpha}_{\alpha}$

The civic component and the Greek background of $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha a$ have been largely neglected in conventional biblical usage and meaning. The standard definition isn't entirely incorrect; rather, it's lacking. When the $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha$ is considered in its larger context, a richer and more complete definition emerges, with far-reaching ramifications. Because the term غ̀кк $\lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha$ was not created or used in a vacuum, its definition must contain a broader Greek context. The usage of $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha$ to characterise the Christian body is particularly notable since it avoids the term "synagogue" in favour of $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha$, which has Greek socio-political connotation.

### 3.0 The Подıऽ (Polis) and the Eкк $\lambda \eta \sigma i ́ \alpha$ (Ecclesia)

In the Greek mind, the $\pi 0 \lambda 1 \zeta$ held incomparable significance to any other social group as it existed for the purpose of living well. Regarding the $\pi 0 \lambda 1 \zeta$ (Polis), Aristotle believed it to be "the ultimate form of human organization and exists to satisfy the highest goals of social life"

Man was defined by his activity and ability within the $\pi 0 \lambda \iota \varsigma$, thus he had no relevance outside of it. Man was considered to be able to live a decent life and attain freedom only through participating in the polis, because only via the polis could man manage his life. The polis was not the source of freedom; it was the mechanism by which citizens gained it via participation. Park identifies the significance of the polis when he states: "Being a part of a polis was the only path to the highest human achievement and was even considered a way to overcome the futility of individual life, the ultimate limitation of which was mortality."

## 4.0 Екк $\boldsymbol{\eta} \boldsymbol{\sigma} i^{\alpha}$ as a Civic Assembly

Civic decision-making in the polis of Athens was enacted through the regular assembly ( $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha \alpha)$ of the full citizenry (dēmos) under the leadership of the five hundred person council. The term غ́ккえךбía was used for the civic assembly of male citizens (dēmos) in a Greek polis ("city-state") or as a temporary group designation for the dēmos while gathered in assembly ( $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i ́ \alpha)$. Mogens Hermann Hansen notes that scholarly consensus defines a Greek polis as "a community of citizens rather than a territory ruled by a government" group designation in Greco-Roman circles.

## 5.0 Екк $\lambda \eta \sigma i ́ \alpha$ as a Self Designation

In the New Testament, $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha$ is employed as a self-designation or label at times, with the connotation of 'assembly', 'gathering', or 'community'. It has been suggested that the Hellenists, who are first mentioned in Acts, were the ones who originally used as a self-designation in Jerusalem. In contrast to the 'Hebrews,' who spoke Aramaic as their mother tongue and at least some Greek, the Jerusalem 'Hellenists' are best described as Jewish Christians who spoke only Greek and knew little or no Aramaic. The Hellenists were most likely Diaspora Jews who had settled in Jerusalem. His Gentile Christ-followers are theologically linked to historic Israel. There, he defamiliarizes himself in a symbolic sense.

From the fifth century BCE onwards, the name was applied to the polis's political assembly, which met to make a variety of choices affecting their common existence. Though it was not one of the most prevalent terms for these organisations, was also a designation for an association. This indicated that it was recognisably familiar. For example, Becker claims that this usage was a critical component in Christians' adoption of Ecclesia.

The use of $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i ́ \alpha$ as a self-designation by Jewish Christian Hellenists does not imply that those who used $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i ́ \alpha$ as a self-designation were no longer members of $\dot{\eta} \sigma \omega v \alpha \gamma \omega \gamma \dot{\eta}$. We are part of ' $\dot{\eta}$ $\sigma ט v \alpha \gamma \omega \gamma \eta$ ', but we are also part of ' $\dot{\eta}$ ह̇кк $\lambda \eta \sigma$ i $\alpha$ ', which is forming within it, which might be used as an additional identifier. At this stage, it's critical to utilise a distinct collective noun. A person or a group of people might easily belong to two different groups with various self-designations at the same time. This is unmistakably what Paul desires.

## 6.0 Екк $\lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha$ as a Group Identity

In Ephesians, Gentiles, the omnipresent and often misunderstood outgroup, are given a 'poor rap' at first. If one only examines the letter's usage of ethnos (though this is far from the sole non-Israelite group description in Ephesians), the addressees are told to "no longer live as the gentiles live" in 4:17, and they are defined as a group of former "gentiles in the flesh" in 2:11. These two phrases appear to show that Ephesians rhetorically regards gentile identity as a past reality to be left aside once "a member of the nations other than Israel" is in Christ, according to Nanos' wide meaning.
In addition, Paul's purpose is described in Galatians 3:8 as one of gentile change. He is characterised as being imprisoned for the sake of these gentiles in $3: 1$, who have now become "fellow heirs, fellow members of the same body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus" as a result of the gospel in Ephesians 3:6. This begs the question: what happened to these Christ-followers' existing social identities? Is it true that they were formerly gentiles? Is this Israel? Are they a part of a different race
or entity? Or are they in a state of liminality, not quite what they were but not quite ready to be? A short review of Ephesians scholarship reveals widely divergent viewpoints on this topic.

## 7.0 Екк $\boldsymbol{\eta} \boldsymbol{\sigma}$ í $\alpha$ in the Context of Judean Public Assemblies

The Judea of Ben Sira's period appears to have included public Jewish gatherings known as $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i ́ \alpha$. Ben Sira's qhl is translated by Sirach as $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha$, , which refers to publicly accessible assemblies of regional communities where legal, political, and religious concerns are discussed. This aligns Sirach's Judean ekklsiai with Lee Levine's description of a public synagogue assembly and/or building, which synagogue academics, including Levine, have yet to address.
Is Sirach looking at Ben Sira's Judean qahal through the lens of a civic $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i ́ \alpha$ in the Greek East, a Jewish $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma^{\prime} \alpha$ in Egypt, or a Jewish $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha$ in Judea in the second century B.C.E. While each idea is viable, one stands preferable-ekklsia as a public synagogue in Judea around the year 132 B.C.E. A mention in 1 Maccabees supports this theory of the $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha$ is a congregation of believers.
The word غ̀кк $\lambda \eta \sigma$ í $\alpha$ appears 48 times in Josephus, 'of which are for a public assembly during the Second Temple period. While Josephus may be utilising $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i ́ \alpha$ provincially for the benefit of his Roman readers, his usage is not unlike to the public $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha \alpha$ recorded in Sirach and 1 Maccabees.
Local political, administrative, economic, judicial, and religious issues would have been discussed at such غ̇ккえ $\quad$ бí $\alpha$ assemblies. In contrast, Philo's writings direct our attention away from Judea and its public/civic $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i \alpha \alpha$ and toward Egypt, where it appears that at least one semipublic Jewish $\dot{\varepsilon} \kappa \kappa \lambda \eta \sigma i ́ \alpha$ society had pre-existing Christ-follower communities.

### 8.0 Conclusion

Clearly, Ecclesia is a broad term that does not relate to a specific sort of assembly, and hence is not a technical term; the type or form of 'assembly' must be defined by the addition of additional words or by the context. Speaking of Israel as 'the assembly of the Lord' or 'all the assembly of Israel' is a common use.
The Pauline use brings together all the ecclesial themes found in the Pauline corpus in a metaphorically complex manner and also works to create for revulsion for the past lives of its new Christian audience focusing on the identity formation. The Ecclesia of the Ephesians was told no longer to walk or conduct their day to day life in the old ways determined by and oriented according to the powerful influences of a 'spatiotemporal complex wholly hostile to God'.
The ecclesia and identity formation in Pauline usage is said to be composed of a 'new humanity'. The various images of the Ecclesia in Ephesians focus on the church as the wellspring of her actions. The letter to the Ephesians was a sense of what it means it belongs to the church along with a diminishing awareness of the church's origins and its place in the history. In this letter, the clear identity of the membership of the Ecclesia by means of attributes is used to re-dynamise the love, desire for unity and the uniqueness. The Ecclesia, its beginning, continuation and consummation in Christ consists with the word 'belonging to the Lord'.

In conclusion, it can be suggested that Christ-followers were not required to completely leave their Roman social identity behind (just those involvements that would have been considered idolatrous or immoral). Ephesians represents a development in the identity-forming discourse within the Christmovement, it seems that these gentiles in Christ, building on Kinzer and Rudolph's understanding, may be described as "fellow citizens" in the "politeia of Israel," while not becoming Jews ( $2: 12,19 ; 3: 6$ ). This represents a secondary development with regard to Christ-movement identity. With that said the social identity of the Christ-movement is not yet separate from other expressions of Judaism and Jewish sacred space. Finally, and more importantly, they are not a "third race" that is neither Jew nor gentile; rather they are Jews and gentiles in Christ, or as Ephesians describes them-members together in the commonwealth of Israel.


Fr. Elwyn Thomas
D.Th. III (N.T)

# The Banquet of God's Kingdom: Sociopolitical Reading <br> (Luke 9:10-17) 

## 1. Introduction

The banquets in the New Testament times mostly related to certain festivals or some auspicious occasions. But in all the four Gospels recorded a banquet hosted by Jesus in the wilderness. While the banquets of elites were bursting in luxury, Jesus' banquet was to comfort the unprivileged. The rulers of the land failed to identify the issues faced by the common people. However, Jesus tried to communicate that the banquet will be for spreading the smile to those in tears. The sociopolitical reading of Luke 9:1017 will enable to locate Jesus' stance regarding the character of a true leader who address the uncertainties of the common people. The feeding of five thousand pericope in the Gospel of Luke provided some unique experience than other Gospel portrayals.

## 2. Sociopolitical Reading of Luke

The sociopolitical reading of the Scripture tends to mean the way one reads the Scripture in the backdrop of the way of living in the society. In other words it points to the Bible in the context of
the society and community. The detailed study of social, economic and political context of the New Testament Gospel texts reveals the meaning and message of the Jesus movement in the Palestinian scenario. Jeremy Punt argues that "the NT emerged from a milieu which was suffused in politics and left its marks on our texts, in a time when politics was considered inseparable part of human life." ${ }^{1}$ Punt reiterates that behind the narrow theological and spiritual dimensions lies the more pertinent and crux of the matter - "the political nature." He writes,

The NT emerged from a world with an integrated, holistic life and where politics, economics, culture and religion as isolated, discrete spheres of life was unheard of. Those elements called politics and religion today where then so closely connected that they amounted to the one and the same. It does not surprise that the political nature of the texts often surfaces not in distinction to but especially through the theological or ideological tenor of NT documents. ${ }^{2}$

The ministry of Jesus, the development of Gospel traditions, and the emergence of rabbinic


Judaism can hardly be understood without taking into account the pervasive impact of the imperial context in ancient Palestine. The New Testament was written under the sociopolitical influences of Roman Empire. Its concepts and language reflect the then prevalent Roman imperialism. Sociopolitical reading draws on the sight of liberation theology to explore oppression and the use of power. ${ }^{3}$ Richard Horsley sketches how dominance by one foreign empire after another, particularly by the Hellenistic and Roman empires, made influential impacts on the ambiance of Palestinian Jewish people, turning the Jewish high-priestly leaders into mediators of the imperial domination and initiating the disintegration of local village, family and social life. ${ }^{4}$ The socio-political reading of the Gospels enables to identify the nuances of liberation performed by Jesus to those in miserable conditions of life.

## 3. Political and Economic policies of Roman Empire

The Palestine world of the first century CE victimized multiple hegemonies in different
standards. The Roman Empire, the Herods as 'client kings,' and the Jewish religious leaders were the distinct ruling authorities of that political scenario. The indirect rule of Rome on Palestine provided a bridge of legitimation that enabled an empire to divide and rule. Popular resentment was deflected onto the local officials, while the imperial rulers remained more remote, less directly evident and involved. The system of government worked through imperial officials or indigenous aristocracy, the net effect on the subject society was the elimination of political participation by the people. All depended upon the powerful control by the elite. Therefore, the position and role of the Roman empire, Herodian 'client kings' or the Judean priestly aristocracy was typical of a colonial situation. ${ }^{5}$

Palestine was basically an ancient agrarian and peasant society where $80-90 \%$ lived in rural areas and small towns as well as gets their sustenance from mere agriculture. However, $10-15 \%$ of the population was lived in the cities. There was great rift between the "rich and poor" in the society. Cities extracted agricultural surpluses through
taxes and rents. In return cities supplied mere cultic services and administration. The villages and towns of Galilee were fleeced with no resources to improve their plight. As a result of this great divide, poverty was a reality that the people had to live their day to day life.

## 4. The Banquet for the deprived

The banquet or community dining in the New Testament was usually related with performance of elite houses (Lk 7:36-50; 14:7-14; 16:19). Most probably the guests and hosts were considered of same ranking and they usually followed their etiquette in the dining. Jesus exhorted his audience regarding the invitation of poor, sick and unprivileged in the society to the community meal or banquet (Lk 14:12-14). But the elites hesitate to accommodate the economic, socially, physically outcasts in their banquets. However, Jesus demonstrated the mode and method of the banquet setting. The feeding of 5000 is common pericope portrayed in all the Gospels heightens the message of God's hospitality in an inclusive experience. The feeding of the crowd in the Lukan narrative extends certain inspirations regarding the banquet of the God's Kingdom.

### 4.1. Perplexity of the Leadership

A brief passage on Herod's response regarding the fame of Jesus is mentioned in between the description of the mission of his disciples (Lk 9:79). The Gospel writer intends by mentioning Herod's reaction before the feeding 5000 narrative obviously clarified the contrast characters of the two provision providers in the Palestine scenario. Herod who has all the provision and was supposed to distribute to his fellow citizen, but he did not completing his role, meanwhile Jesus providing to those who came to him in the desert, where there is no means of provision. Herod literally heard about the growing of the 'Kingdom of God,' but the phrase was dubious for him. He thought that an alternative political kingdom is sprouting in his territory. He could not identify the depth of work done by Jesus. Herod noticed certain miracles and wonders were done by Jesus as well as he won the heart of people to create an alternative space of domination.

The perplexity of Herod also consider as the synonym for the expression of all leaders of that time. They all consider Jesus is preparing a new kingdom by altering the law and rules to fight against the rulers. Herod heard distinct views on Jesus' manifestation. All of them were the prophets oppressed by the rulers of their time (Lk 11:47) and they had sharpness in their words of teachings. Those prophets like John, Elijah opened up their mouth against the wrong doings of the rulers and the state ( $1 \mathrm{Kgs} 21: 17-29$; Lk 3:20). The rulers of the Palestine scenario definitely know their rule was enjoyable mostly to those who were in upper strata of the society meanwhile, the poor were getting worsen. Herod scared about when Jesus will raise his voice against the state. He anticipated Jesus may cause turbulences for his kingdom and the prevailed state of rule.

### 4.2. Hospitality of Jesus

Jesus went to Bethsaida along with his disciples for a time of privacy which suggest a time of retreat for Jesus and his disciples. ${ }^{6}$ However, the crowd followed Jesus and his disciples. Jesus wholeheartedly received the crowd. Luke omitted mention of Jesus' sympathy for the crowds (Mtt 14:14), and also the detail that he saw them a sheep without a shepherd (Mk 6:34). However, the term "recieved" ( (дї̈̈-ï̈áé) mentioned Jesus attitude towards the crowd. The rulers of the land did not take into considerations the wretchedness of the crowd (B-ëiò), simply the common people, but Jesus extends his hands and heart for the vulnerability of the people. The term đ̈ä-ïiáé itself mentioned the hospitality of Jesus to the crowd without any agenda, which is contrasted to the welcoming of the tyrannies. Without any hesitation Jesus welcomed the crowd and provided them according to their needs.

### 4.3. Banquet in the Wilderness

Jesus addressed the people mentioned in the Gospel as crowds (B--eiiò). They were the common people of the land. The people with variable vulnerabilities, physical ailments, mental, physical, social as well as economic stress were included in this section. Obviously they were non-
elites and had no participation in the governing. Their issues and worries then became unattended. The references in Luke 6:17 portrayed a clear depiction of the "crowd." They were ostracized from the mainstream society. The crowd was deprived of peace and consolation. However, the mighty words and deeds of Jesus enhanced them to attain peace in the midst of Roman politics. The peace provided by Jesus enabled them to stand firm and accomplish their identity amidst of variant hegemonic tyrannies. The words about the kingdom of God absolutely provided solace to those wandered without a destiny in the worst Palestinian political scenario. Thus the gospel about the kingdom of God by Jesus provided banquet of mental solace for the people in a worst milieu.

The sickness of the people were regarding of distinct forms. Some affected certain transmittable illness, some were caught by demons, and some affected lifelong diseases, all those who were not well generally considered as outcasts. They were driven out from the mainstream society; even their citizenship may not be valid because of their sickness. In short, they lost their identity because of their sickness. Jesus through his mission in general and especially in this pericope healed many who were sick. In that Palestinian context, no one receive a sick person, but Jesus gave hospitality even to the sick person. By curing the sickness those people regain their lost identity and it paved the way to re-enter into the society according the law (Lk 5:14). Consequently, Jesus provided the banquet of physical wellness to the people followed him in the wilderness.

At the end of the pericope Jesus provided enough food for the crowd more than 5000. Actually, the rulers of the land must be the bread providers for the people in the society. But the imperial ruling and elite leadership tends the common people to stay in the darkness of poverty. The Roman Empire, Herodian kings, Jewish priestly leaders enjoyed their lives lavishly meanwhile the common were fought for the daily bread. Jesus' attitude is obvious in the pericope regarding the liberation from the bondage of
captivity of those rulers of the land. Jesus insisted to seat the crowd in a row of 'fifty.' The number 'fifty' means the ideology of 'Jubilee' means the liberation of the people from the bondages of the society. The banquet of Jesus in the wilderness is the banquet of providence. Jesus demonstrated how the crowd should be respond to those who are in hungry. While the rulers failed to address the hungry of people in a society, Jesus provided them enough food and kept the left over for those who even have no food. Thus, the banquet of providence in the wilderness was an experience to those participated in the banquet, 'how to address the issues who are near to you.'

## 5. Conclusion

Jesus preached the Kingdom of God to the people. The elites and ruling class identified this as an alternative mode of governance by Jesus to upheaval the prevailed system of rule in the Palestinian scenario. However, the common people admired the kingdom of God as the ideal space to understand and experience an ideal way of life. The banquet in the wilderness in the Lukan narrative stresses, how a leader should address the issues of those who are near to the leader. The character of Jesus as receptive host without any hesitation and his unconditional providence portrayed by Luke surpass the character of typical rulers who had not good relationship to their then subject at that Palestinian milieu.

## End notes

${ }^{1}$ Jeremy Punt, "The New Testament as Political Documents," Scriptura 116/1 (2017), 1.
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${ }^{6}$ I. Howard Marshall, The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 361.

Dn. Lijo Lawrance BD IV

## Women Leadership in the Early Church

Junia in Romans 16:7 is almost certainly a fe male, and seems to be called an apostle (there is debate about how to take the phrase). Given that Paul also descries Timothy, Silvanus, Epaphroditus, and Barnabus as apostles, it is also probably that 'apostle' here is a non-technical term for a messenger or someone involved in travelling missionary work.

Priscillia, of the Priscilla and Aquila combo team, seems to take a leading role, certainly she is working alongside her husband, as in Acts 18:26, where she is involved in furthering instruction to Apollos.

Phoebe, mentioned in Romans 16:1-2 is described as a deacon and a patron. This probably indicates that Phoebe has enough wealth and influence that she is able to use it for visiting and local christians in catering to not only their physical needs as guests, but some help in political or social matters. Her role as deacon also likely involves carrying Paul's letter to Rome (and possibly explaining parts of it).

The New Testament contains some other female figures, named and unnamed, who appear to function along the lines of Graeco-Roman pa-
tronage, using wealth and influence to support the Christian community and advance its causes.

Moving beyond the New Testament, there are few significant female leaders. The threefold pattern of bishop-presbyter-deacon emerges relatively quickly after the NT, so that you see this kind of pattern in the 2nd century writings. So that kind of structural position is mostly closed within early mainstream Christianity. Noteable exceptions include the Montanists, a late 2nd century movement that emphasises continuing revelation, strict moralism, and Phrygia as the location of the New Jerusalem. Prominent among the leaders were Priscilla and Maximilla, two leading prophetic figures. One might conjecture that the status of 'prophet' was a way for a woman to exercise teaching/leadership authority and sidestep the (still-emerging) structure of local churches.

You also tend to see the emergence of the ideals of martyrdom, then asceticism, and virginity, which creates alternate spaces for women to be seen as significant figures within early christianity. So martyrdom offered one way in which women, not so much as leaders, but as

exemplars, might fulfil their Christian calling and become role-models to others. Women such as Perpetua and Felicitia. (3rd century martyrs). In the later 3rd century you see more of the development of asceticism, and someone like Olympias the Deaconess (ca 361-408) shows the kind of leadership a woman might exercise. This social power was increased by being either a dedicated virgin or else a widow, since in those two cases a woman was freed from certain social bonds, and thus occupied a more independent social position.

Rodney Stark is one who makes this claim, in his book The Triumph of Christianity: How the Jesus Movement became the World's Largest Religion, chapter 7. Note, though, that Stark doesn't think this is the only causative factor to explain Christianity's growth.

He notes at the start of that chapter, that (a) "religious movements always attract more women than men" (unless there are prohibitive
factors from women joining, but goes on to argue that "Women were especially drawn to Christianity because it offered them a life that was so greatly superior to the life they otherwise would haveled."

One of the ways you establish the case of my broader point, is to consider the situation of women in antiquity more broadly. Women in Greek culture-families lived very secluded and controlled lives. Roman women were less secluded, but still very much subordinate in law and custom.

Another interesting dynamic is 'hiding in plain sight' in the pages of the New Testament. Paul knows a great deal of women, mentions a lot of them by name, clearly some of them function as patrons in providing money and material support. He never appears to refer to named persons by their gender.






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Dn. Alan K Varghese BD IV











































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##  MOI(O)



Dn. Jinu Mathew Johnson
BD IV







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Dn. K Smijai Simon
BD IV

Bliss in other words known as supreme happiness, One en ters this degree of bliss when everything is done perfectly. Here MY FATHER is the one who has carried out everything perfectly, including his death at the hands of the Lord. You might all think why do I say so? The day when we came to know that he was diagnosed with Cancer and when doctors informed only palliative care is possible because of his old age and health conditions, he started planning to hand over his responsibilities to his elder son ie My brother, by informing what and all has to be done and also his wishes in the future which should happen according to his will. When the day arrived for him to sleep at the hands of the Lord, I would say he waited for me to come from church where I went to attend the Holy Eucharist which is 20 kilometers away from the place where I reside, I asked him in the early hours of sunday morning whether should go to church today, seeing his illness and in a strong voice, he said Yes,

# The death of a father can be one of the most challenging moments anyone will ever have. A father is someone you have known your whole life and you may feel an immence sense of emptiness and fragility. 

he ensured in his final hours that church and God cannot be kept aside in our daily life. He was very strong enough and as if God has already informed him that till I return from church nothing happens to him and I wonder no man can ever describe the nature and signficance of their experience of death to other men, Even though the majority of us would rather not talk about death, it is reality that we must accept, especially if we are serious,about our spiritual growth. Death ceases to be a source of fear or certainly for the experienced spiritual aspirant and it instead revealed for what is truly is. A door way an essential component of our existence and a chance to expand our consciousness. By divine revelation, men are aware that death is general and every ones specific death are part of the plan of God's ordering wisdom and self giving love. Death is transfomed from a problem into a mystery because of this revelation. That is its no longer appears to be a reality whose full meaning touches the infinite and thus defies human comprehension. Only God is truly immortal, man is mortal, Man has been given lifeby God in freedom. He also takes his life away in freedom. A Christians death is a step toward the universal arrival of Gods kingdom. The real.....creation is for ever freed from the power of evil and is prepared to be incorporated into the apocalyptic kingdom of God's love through this death in union with Christ.

In our life Father make a tremendous impact, while we peddal for the first time withought training wheels,He held the back seat of the bicycle he first time without training wheels, they hold the back seat of the bicycle and cheer us His support means the world to us. I was enjoying every moment I spent with him until
his presence faded, death always ends a person's life-relationship we shared with the person. Our memories of our relationship with our fathers include the endless conversations we had with him. The time we spent together, his looks, smiles and even his silence. Some people are fortunate enough to be able to say, Good bye, "Yes, I am indeed extremely fortunate, "when its comes time to say goodbye to my father, where I was with him until his last breath. I felt very fortunate and proud to be able to say that my relationship with my dad was always happy. He was a great teacher and mentor, trust worthy and fair. He was also very practical, and kind to others. He always helped, encouraged, me to take advantage of every opportunity, and ensured I had the time of my life to the fullest.

The death of a father can be one of the most challenging moments anyone will ever have. A father is someone you have known your whole life and you may feel an immence sense of emptiness and fragility. I always look for options now to avoid conversations about my Dad, Where I cannot think of a moment without him in my daily life. I always think that now, I have a person with God with whom I can share anything and everything. I have a guiding star in heaven to guide and protect me along with God. His soul will live on in my heart, and I will hold him close always. Death and life cannot be separated. We have to finally accept that death is in-evitable, if we are to live honestly, live without fear. One should a.lways have time for family and loved ones which cannot be regained in the most precious moments which was taught by my dad in his life. Do remember You Only Live Once. (Yolo)



Dn．Jijo K Joy BDIV




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Dn. Jestin Jose
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－Urdu－Ammee
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－English－Mummy，Mom



Dn．Gibin George BD IV

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Dn. Ebin Eldho BD IV







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Rony Benny BD III













































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## James Webb Telescope: A peek into the Magnificence of God's creation

From ancient times, we have peered into the skies seeking to un derstand the magnitude of God's handiwork. Researchers have found cave art dating from the Palaeolithic and Neolithic eras suggesting early humans' use and understanding of complex astronomy. Even King David could not escape this fascination as he penned Psalm 19's open-


Mathew P Thomas BD II ing verse: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). This quest has led theologians and scientists alike to peer into the skies for clues to help them build and support cosmogonist theories. So, following this great tradition of scientific and theological inquiry, the James Webb space telescope images provide us with the latest window into God's creative impetus.

## A Framework of Cosmic Expansion

Just this summer, we stood transfixed with the first images captured by the Webb telescope. Images like the galaxy cluster SMACS 0723 and Stephan's Quintet, a visual grouping of five galaxies, gave us the deepest and earliest known glimpses of the universe, providing new insight into galactic interactions and evolution in the early universe. Astrophysicist John Mather, senior project scientist for the Webb Space Telescope, posits that
these magnificent images paint a picture of an ever - expanding cosmos, supporting the theory of an all encompassing (i. e., happening everywhere at once) Big Bang as a process occuring in time. Therefore, Mather suggests, we can see evidence of the universe's expansion that began about 13.8 billion years ago, spanning the sky and filling the universe.

The book of Genesis provides us with a theological narrative that begins with creation of the cosmos. In this narrative, God speaks the cosmos into existence, ex nihilo (i. e., out of nothing), following the normative cosmology theistic formulation. Now, the Bible does not pretend to be a scientific treatise. However, it suggests a powerful force (i. e., God's voice) setting in motion the creation events akin to the explosion described in the Big Bang theory. We all probably remember the bumper sticker that declared, " I believe in the Big Bang theory - God said it, and 'Bang!' it happened." The images captured by the Webb telescope provide further evidence of God's wisdom and power as he created the heavens and the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars (Genesis 1:1-5).

As massive amounts of data from the Webb telescope are analyzed, scientists are beginning to understand that things are not precisely as they previously thought. In a Washington Post article, Dan Coe, an astronomer at the Space Telescope Science Institute, explained that scientists thought the "early universe was this chaotic place where's all these clumps of star formation, and things are all a jumble." However, the data show nicely disklike organized galaxies and not the previously thought chaos. The webb telescope revealed an expanded sample of early galaxies, providing scientists with a clearer idea of how galaxies came into beings. It also provided a clearer pictures of the reionizations process that helped particles come together to form the necessary elements fo the formation of stars and galaxies. All these elements together suggest an incredible combination of chaos and design. The surprising thing is that the data gathered by the Webb Telescope suggests more design and less chaos than expected, underscoring an interesting balance be-
tween these two forces.
I know that, for some, the first reaction is to think that all of this contradicts the long-held doctrine of biblical cosmology and stands in violation of biblical inerrancy. But that is not so. The data gathered by the Webb Telescope, the research produced, and the information analyzed support the theological idea of a God who created the cosmos by the power of his word. Moreover, one could find that the atheist's framework of a random, chaotic creation is incapable of defeating God; nor do the arguments wielded by those advocating design theories fit seanlessly with the evidence. The pictures of red speckled galacies, sparkling nebulas, and star clusters underscore the work of a God who has set his glory above for us to see as we look at his heavens and admire the work of his fingertips (Psalm 8:1).

One of the most salient images captured by the Hubble Telescope was the Eagle Nebula. This image shows three pillars of dust illuminated by young stars, resembling an earthly landscape. NASA scientists can hardly wait to see the images the Webb Telescope will produce of this nebula and the new data to be gleaned by this fantastic instrument. It is clear there is more to our cosmos than we have previously been able to see.

In Alien: Covenant, the second Alien prequel, the crew of the Covenant was brought out of stasis by a rogue signal that turned out to be a rendition of John Denver's song Take me Home, Country Roads sang by Elizabeth Shaw, the sole survivor of the Prometheus. This transmission led these explorers to a deadly encounter. It is highly improbable that the Webb Telescope picks up a rogue alien message, as portrayed by these movies. However, I think we will see more evidence of the creation of the universe. We will find scientific data that will help us understand how God leveraged design and chaos in fascinating ways to create the cosmos. And as we look at the stunning images captured by the telescope, we will join the psalmist in declaring how God's glory is evident in the skies, and his power is proclaimed through creation (Psalm 19:1).



Joseph James BD II

Not every soul is born with dreams and hopes. Some ar rive silently, except for the unheard cries of a mother in labor, fading away in the deafing roar of a restless night. The twins followed the latter, for they had none but their mother. In an old wooden kennel, damp from the winter dew, with closed eyes, the twins slept, unaware that the slight warmth that kept them alive was their mothers fur.

The December sun failed to warm the hill station air, but it did not remove the dew swamp. "Minni had two babies", the little girl exclaimed. The cold fish adults of the house weren't nearly pleased. 'They are so cute", the Shrill affirmed her love for the puppies. She opened the kennel. Minni - bitch jumped out in a rush to empty the bladder that it held the whole night. With a sense of maturity beyond her age, the little girl gently touched the babies three innocent hearts.

In a week, the puppies opened their round black eyes. In two, they could walk. In three, little milk tooth ached for attention, which spared no sole shoes. In four, Minni's mammary glands dried up, and paired
with stolid adults of the house who would not give a tinkers damn the hungry puppies resorted to wailing; little did they know that in the cruel world; the adults conspired to get rid of this nuisance

Far from the little girl and Minni, the puppies were dropped into the roadside, "Vaaya Keeriya Daivam Kazhikkanum Kodukkum", from the inside of the speeding car, they justified, quoting the mythological Phrase, 'the God who tore its mouth open shall feed it too. Those eyes blind folded with fake optimism mixed with sarcasm. The inner thought of the toxic followers of 'Vaya keeriya Daivam' agreed that it wasn't necessarily Gods responsibility or fault, for in their eyes Gods had nothing to do with the lives of 'now' stray puppies.

But, the brown-eyed milkman had a soft heart as of his God, so he pledged to save the puppies from starving; so did the bakery owner who wore ironed mundu that the nibbling puppies wrinkled. Unlike his God, the milkman lacked the ability to multilply five bread into five thousand, and the bakery owner eight fewer hands
than his Goddess, yet their effort saw that the puppies making it to week six

On a wednesday morning, against the usual, he found a puppy missing from his mundu, followed by a look of fear on the puppies face. Against the half- opened shutter of his bakery, he wondered where the other puppy was. It look him a day to realize that the gloom in the puppy's eyes recited an ode to death. It purred about its sibling. But he wasn't sure, did the poor baby force the impending end, which years of experiance that his bald affimed could see.

On his way to kneel before his God, the following sunday morning his brown eyes froze on a while fluff ball, on the road in a puddle of blood, He stood perified. He looked at the fluff ball as many looked upon the cross. He cursed himself time and again until the guilt took over his senses. He held the fluff ball in the same arms that poured it milk, hoping for any sign of life to only sob harder. With the tears rolling down his cheeks, he blamed himself. Had be taken them home, they would't leave the earth un-lived.








Rony Varghese
BD II
























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Sajan Samuel BD II
























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Br. Robin T Vaidyan BD I


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Libin Varghese
BD I





























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Prijin Pappachan BD III

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Dn．Rinu Prince BD IV



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Dn. Sibi Sebastian BD IV

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Basil K Sabu
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Br. Libin Sam Baby
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Somu Sivaji BD III

## Singing

 The Pain

Thhe beats of the drums with rhythm of tunes the song I singing with my heart full of pain. The wind rang the bells

When I sing the song in not the infinite bliss, the wind also feel the pain with my song. No father, No mother, I don't know who they are, The World adopted me I am singing the song for everyone I am sorry for every one, those who see me I am sorry for every one, those who are help me I am singing the song with heart full of pain Because I can't see every one I am Blind, ...I feel the pain with my dark eyes...

Those who have the pain look into my dark eyes
The rain drops fall to my cheeks They also had the story of pain The sunlight falls to my face It also had the story of pain I am singing the song for every one, with the heart full of pain.
I am blind I feel the song of pain
The drum beats with the
Rhythm of pain tunes the song
For everyone ....I singing for everyone I am singing the song of pain ..


No one in this world is born brave.
But you. Yea, YOU. You do not belong to that list.

You beling to an elite class.
The family is the whole world for many.
But when that world turned against you, you stood rock solid.

You saw parents who laughed to the jokes of their kids, who danced to their tune, who clapped and rejoiced and listened to what they wanted to be. You could only see all those. Be bold, forYOU are your greatest support.

You saw friends who got the freedom you yearned for

You prayed for ears you that you wished would hear and hands that you wished would caress you during testing times. You wished for wishes that never came true.

Be bold for YOU are your greatest relief.
You wished to have them as yours. You craved for such support at times.

You succumbed to the thoughts of never gotten freedom. You are not wrong, for YOU deserve it.

But you. Yea, YOU are the bravest flock around.
The pits you might fall might be filled with dark-
ness to the brim but the world desires for people like you. There were times when you decided to leave. There were times when you decided to stop.

There were, there are, and there will be times of irony when blood will prove to be thinner than water; where your mind will be left desolate.

Fear not and never linger upon that saddened ground.

When the weather seemed gloomy, you built yourself a rainbow.

When words were sharper than a scythe, you resorted to build a protective fort of patience When the ones whom you looked up to, looked down with despise, you tread ahead using your tireless feet.

Stand up Oh Relentless Soldier.
Heads up and march forward solitarily to this life's bloodiest battle field.

The days may become darker than ever. The roads may lead to a never-ending trail.

The earthly fires may devour your desires.
Hands that should save you, lead you and protect you will cease to do them.

But, remember,
YOU are your greatest support.
YOU are your greatest relief and
YOU are what completes You.
YOU deserve YOURSELF.



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Aenjo Scaria
BD I






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## Abraham K Samuel BD I





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Jubin Bijoy
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Fr. Dr. Mathew Varghese


















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## सत् चित् आनान्द्

## Sat - Chit - Anand

## Truth - Consciousness - Bliss

## SACCIDANANDA AND INDIAN CHRISTIAN THINKING



Dn. Kurian Mathew BD IV

## Introduction

Indian Christian theology is a Christian theology which is an attempt to explain the faith and teachings of Christianity in Indian religio-cultural perspectives. We can see this type of exposition of Christianity from the ancient times itself (eg. Logos concept of Greek philosophy is used to explain, who Jesus Christ is? in the prologue of St. John's Gospel)

Saccidänanda, the term is used to represent the NirgunaParabrahman concept in the ancient Indian religio-philosophical tradition. Even though it is an Indian God-concept, some of the Indian Christian thinkers tried to connect it with the Christian dogma Trinity-Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this sense the Indian Christian theologians actually tried to follows the footprints of the early church fathers, who were explained the Christian faith with the help of Greek philosophy. We would try to understand some Indian Christian theologians understandings of exposition of Trinity through the Indian traditional concept 'Saccidänanda'.

Dr.Geevarghese Mar Osthathios about Saccidananda and Trinity concept:

## Atraita Theology

The Sanskrit term 'atraita' is the opposite of 'traita'. Traita means the state of being in 'three'. Atraita, therefore should mean the state of not being in 'three' or the state that cannot be described as 'three'.
'Athreya', another Sanskrit term give almost the same meaning.
'Atraita' is an apophatic (negative) term. Mar Osthathios tried to interpret the essential nature of the ultimate reality, the Trinity by this term. Holy Trinity does not mean that God is three, but beyond one, two or three. He explained Love of God as the 'ousia' (essence) of God by the help of Johannine statement ‘God is love' (1 John 4:8,16). The essence of God is not identity of 'Jeevatma' and 'Paramatma' as Advaita teaches, but eternal sharing of love in the triune AtraitaGod. In this point of view, Atraita theology contradicts Advaita of Sankaracharya.

The interpretation of 'Atraita' is done by the interpretation of 'love' as the divine essence through the following statements .
a) "Love", The paramount expression of the reality of God.
b) Love in essence and energia implies God and Trinity, He says that, "God who is love in essence cannot be a monad, because in a monad there is no possibility of the energia or exercise of Love". According to him, mutuality of love and sharing of love only possible in a tri-unity and only when God is love, there is the possibility of sharing, out pouring and mutuality.

## Saccidananda and Trinity

Mar Osthathios accepted the concept sat-chitananda interpretation of Keshub Chandra Sen as sat is called the Father, chit is Christ the Son and ananda is the Holy Spirit. And he used this terminology as a psynonym for 'atraita' along with the compassionate Allah of Islam. He explained the 'sat', the being as the 'ousia', the very being of the father. He relate trinity with Satyam

SivamSundaram, the absolute God of Hinduism
If we look through the lens of Advaitic dialectical category of Nirguna and Saguna, the sat-chit-ananda terminology belongs to the Nirguna category which represents the essential nature of ultimate reality, ie being (existence) and consciousness and Bliss. Which are not expressions or gunas or qualities? Mar Osthathios interpret the concept of 'atrita' theology as Saccidänanda. He himself says that Love is the essential nature of AtraitaGod. The question here is that how an apophaticterminology (negation) attained or explained a concrete level about the state of Brahman? Saccidänanda cannot represent any of the qualities but denotes the essence. Atraita tries to interpret love as the essence of God, the help of Johannine Statement 'God is Love' (1 Jn.48, 16). I thought that the 'Love of God' belongs to the essential qualities or 'sattaGuna' of God and which is the model of a qualified interpretation of Brahman or Saguna Brahman, which promote by the Visistadvaita of Ramanujacharya.

Secondly. Sat-chit-ananda, the combination of three Sanskrit terms, has a 'threeness' in the interpretation of the essential nature, 'SattaBhava' and also which has a oneness in the essence when which act as a compound term Sacciåänanda . But in the case of 'atraita' a negative term itself denies the 'threeness' or traita as 'advaita' deny duality.

## Conclusion

Through 'atraita' theology Mar Osthathios tried to evaluate the sharing and Trinitarian fellowship in trancendal realm. He wants to realize the sharing love and fellowship in humanity. We can see an inner urge for a human religion of love and through that he visualize a peaceful humanity with the fellowship of love. As like 'Advaita' is a denotation of Godhead or ultimate reality, which is beyond oneness or twoness, similarly, 'Atraita' has a denotation of the God head beyond oneness, twoness and threeness. So we can say that 'Atraita' fulfills some ideas of Saccidänanda to a certain extend.





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## Pilgrimage in the Bible and in the Malankara Tradition



Fr. Dr. Mathews John Manayil

Holy Land is a basic attraction in the life of every Christian in their faith as well. The Biblical history itself commences with the pilgrimage of Abram and culminates in the sojourn life with Christ Immanuel. It needs a study on the basic concept of pilgrimage from the Holy Scripture, primarily to comprehend on the concept of attributed holiness of the land and on the reflections to gather on the concept of pilgrimage attached to it.

## The Holy Land and Pilgrimage in the Old Testament

Primarily, one could note that, the Promised Land in every respect is considered to be Holy. As early as in the sojourn of Abram, the promise being made that, "to your offspring I will give this land" (Gen. 12:7), and the response of Abram to the promise was to build an altar and worship the Lord. This promise and the responses of the promise as worship had continued down in the history of Israel. In the precise instructions given, the Lord told Moses to, "Have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8). Sanctuary is obviously a holy place.

So even when the people were sojourning to the Promised Land they were advised to have an exclusive holy place for Almighty God to
dwell among them. The concept of reserving a particular place as holy thus goes back to the presettlement period of the Israelites. Later on, Israelites had decided to have their own permanent worshipping place for which Jerusalem was chosen as the place to build the temple.

Again, the Promised Land became an irrevocable point of expectation for the sojourning peoples of Israel and so itself; the concept took space in the book of Numbers and in Joshua. But even then, the metaphor of 'Holy Land' among them and for the reader of anytime stands valid. It is based on this concept of the holy otherness that pilgrim Psalms started gaining its place among the Hebrew Scriptures.

This is made clear when the "Songs of Ascents" were understood clearly as pilgrim Psalms to the Holy Land. Over the major three festivals in Jewish traditions, which are the Passover, the feast of Tabernacle and the harvest feast of autumn, people journeyed up to Jerusalem in groups, and in order to make their journey easier and to bring a devotional air, the pilgrims would customarily recite the Psalms. It could be generally inferred that these Psalms were sung by caravans who are pilgrims to Jerusalem. As Michael Fallon rightly opines that, "Psalms celebrate the positive value of work and the blessing and the joy of family life, including the family of Israel centred in the mother-city, Jerusalem" ${ }^{1}{ }^{1}$

Later, in prophetic literature, the distribution of the land is considered to be integrally holy. We see clear instructions on a holy district which is supposed to be separated and sanctified in the prophetical writings of Ezekiel (Cf. Ezekiel 45: 19).

Considering the aforementioned aspects from the Hebrew Scripture, we could now move onto those points on pilgrimage as it is reflected in the Scripture. In the sojourning period the 'people of God', felt that 'Yahweh' himself chose the Holy Land as the dwelling place of Israel (Joshua 1:26), they saw 'Yahweh' in the Ark, the portable one. The object of pilgrimage became the Ark of the Covenant which was placed at Shiloh. Customarily, they went there three times a year, on
the feasts of Unleavened Bread (Passover), Weeks (Shavu'ot) and Tabernacles (Sukkot). The pilgrims to Shiloh include men and women, the sacrificial rituals are like those described in the first book of Samuel (2:13-14).

From this practice of venerating an itinerant Ark to placing it in a specific location, that is, in Jerusalem Temple, the pattern and character of the pilgrimage of the Israelites were changed. Then, Solomon would have the chance to build the Temple. Thus, the centralization of the religious authority had shaped up the pilgrimage to the holy land, considerably. For the people, eventually, the place not only became the temple of God, but the whole territory and the hill in which the temple was built as sacred. These aspects certainly led to the formation of mass pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

This could be substantiated with the further elaborative attributions the temple of Jerusalem had among the pilgrims. It is believed that, the waters of the deep blocked on the first day of creation here; it is taken as the first place and the centre of the world and the site in which the dust was gathered to create Adam, as the place where Adam offered his first sacrifice, where Adam's grace is located, the place where Cain and Abel offered their sacrifice, Noah's sacrifice after the flood, the place in which Abraham was circumcised, the sacred place in which Melchizedek's altar is erected in Salem. Precisely, in relation to the sacred history they had learned the temple became the material commemorative place. The whole of the community were disheartened and shattered when they had lost the sight of the temple through the destruction and exile.

Let us now turn to the New Testament to see how the idea of pilgrimage perspective influenced the followers of Jesus and the Early Church.

## Holy Land and Pilgrimage in the New Testament

The sanctity of the land could be affirmed with the saving sojourn of the second person of the Holy Trinity through it. The very truth about incarnation and everything about the journey of our Lord through the specific land cannot go
unnoticed. As Schlink M Basilea rightly observes, "The Almighty God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, set foot on this very ground- the Son of God as the Son of man. Therefore, this land with its sites truly deserves its name, the Holy land". ${ }^{2}$ The Gospel of John emphasizes the fact that Jesus himself considered journeying to Jerusalem as something significant (Cf. 2:13, 7:10, 12: 12). It is well attested by the New Testament commentators that all these journeys carried out by Jesus over the festal times had serious connection with the economy of salvation. Obviously in the Johannine narratives of the Passover, there exists a clear overshadowing of it; what previously was the deliverance from Egypt for the Israelites, here is the deliverance in Christ through his sacrifice. It is in this good spirit of renewal that the old concept of the Holy Land got transitioned into the new one, which is related to the events surrounding the incarnated Word of God.

In the ministry of Paul, it is clear that he had given importance to Jerusalem. He was intensely intending to go to Jerusalem, and in Caesarea he, along with the author of the Acts of Apostles was confronted with a local person who had the gift of prophecy (Acts 21: 8 ff .). It is pronounced that Paul will be bound and handed over to the gentiles. People who loved him tried to stop him, to which Paul responded, saying, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21: 13). This certainly reflects on how ideally and intensely Paul longed in his heart to be identified with Christ, and that too to be at the place where Jesus Himself is convicted and crucified.

In the New Testament, life in here itself is considered to be a pilgrimage, Peter in his Epistle is referring to the faithful as "aliens and exiles" (I Peter 2:11). The very presence of God is considered to be a spiritual locality in a renewed interest. J. Cornelis de Vos commends on this, "The believers themselves become the 'Land' of Salvation, a space bound by the community keeping itself separate morally for God and at the same time by the presence of God amidst this social, spatial "Temple" "and Land"; that is, the com-
munity of believers, people of God" ${ }^{3}$.
Thus, the concept of the Holy land had three dimensions in the New Testament. Firstly, as in the Old Testament it takes an undeniable continuity; secondly, it takes a transcendental dimension or spiritualizes the concept; and thirdly, it is seen through the person of Jesus Christ. By the rejection of Jesus Christ in the land by the authorities, He transcends the territorial dimension and extends it to the whole world through His Church by the fact that the notion of the Kingdom of God is transcending the physical premises. The Risen Christ made radical change in the concept of the Land. With the Acts of the Apostles the centre of history changed from Jerusalem to the whole world as of Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19 and Acts. 1:8. When Philip meets the Ethiopian Eunuch on the road to Gaza, he is returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Acts 8:27). Even though there are references about the pilgrimage like in Jn. 4 Jesus says to Samaritan woman that, 'the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth'. Thus, in the risen Christ we see a major shift of emphasis; what previously was considered to be completely confined to the sanctity of the physical premises.

## Pilgrimage History of the Syrian Christians of India

The Syrian Christians of India follow certain spiritual ethos as they do in the rituals and practices of spirituality like fasting, lent, personal and public prayer times. The pilgrimage to the tombs and special places connected with their spiritual leaders are very common. It traces back the time when the Portuguese colonization was in effect; the Syrian leader Anjilimoottil Itty Thomman Kathanar went to Mylapore in Tamil Nadu, where the tomb of the Apostle Thomas was enshrined. There his meeting with 'AhathallaBava' changed the Syrian Christian history.

Another example is that of the journey of Paremakkil ThomaKathanar to Lisbon. As they beheld the pilgrim nostalgia, the pilgrimage to the holy land was their dream, even though their social as well as economic condition did not favour them to engage into a pilgrimage to the

Holy Land. Parumala Mar Gregorios, their spiritual as well as social reformer, travelled to the Holy Land in the last decade of the nineteenth century and wrote the first ever travelogue in vernacular Malayalam language 'Oorslem Yaatravivaranam'. "This trust is worthy to be there in His foot steps" ${ }^{\prime \prime}$. He exhorts that the visualisation through the eye is stronger than that heard by ears; Jesus Christ's Passion and Resurrection becomes more realistic to our minds when we are there than by reading the Bible. He added that it is not necessary to venerate the True God in a particular place, but it could be done in Spirit. But to Fill in True Spirit and Truth one can percept it through one's eyes, and he advocated for the pilgrimage.

The Syrian Christians treated the pilgrimage to the Holy Land as a spirituality enhancing endeavour. Few more examples of the pilgrimage by the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Christians to the Holy Land are cited here. Vattasseril Geevarghese Ramban along with Kochuparampil Paulose Ramban, Kallasseril Punnoose Ramban, Karottuveettil Fr.Yuyakkeem, Kodiyattu Fr. Kuriakkose and six others made pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1908. On that pilgrimage Vattasseril Ramban and Kochuparampil Ramban were consecrated and ordained as Bishops at Jerusalem. H.H. Geevarghese II Catholicose made pilgrimage along with Fr. C. M. Thomas and Fr. C. J. Scariah, in 1934; they visited most of the places in and around the Holy Land. They were hosted by the Anglican Bishop, Dr Graham Brown, at Jerusalem. In 1964, Rev. Dr. N. J. Thomas Ramban along with Rev. Dr. Bishop, a German medical practitioner, visited the Holy Land. He exclaimed, "As St. Paul writes, 'such an one caught up to the third heaven', such a heavenly aspiration had to those who had this spirituality of attraction to the Churches, notably the Holy Sepulchre and all the places of the Holy Land". ${ }^{5}$ In 1965, H.H. Augen I Catholicose, along with Bishop Daniel Mar Philexinos, Bp. Paulose Mar Philexinose and Fr. T. C. Jacob, visited the Holy Land. In 1978, Very Rev. Cyril Ramban, along with a group, visited the Holy Land. In the history of pilgrimage, three of the Syrian Christians
met death while they were in the Holy Land. They are Fr. Mathai (8thMedam 1927), a priest of the Vadakara Church in Ernakulum; Very Rev. PulikkottilYakoobRamban (18thMedam 1927) of Kunnamkulam in Trichur, and Dn. Geevarghese (1929) from Mattancherry in Kochi; they were buried in Sehion Cemetery, Jerusalem.

The list of pilgrimages by the Syrian Christians to the Holy Land is exhaustive with Bishops, priests, dignitaries and lay people. Some of their experiences are published as travelogues. But today, as the cultural, economic and social background of the Syrian Christians has changed, they treat the Holy Land pilgrimage as a 'feather in their cap' and as a matter of unhealthy pride. Some leaders take it as a commercial opportunity.

The concept of Pilgrimage is not a new phenomenon but had a sound Biblical background. Malankara Church had it even from the colonization period itself, and is continuing in this century.

## (Footnotes)

1 Michael Fallon, The Psalms. (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2005), 447.
2 Schlink M Basilea. The Holy Land Today. (Darmstadt: Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary, 1975), 12.

3 J. Cornelis de Vos. "Temple and Holy Land" in Holy Places and Cult.ed. Erkki Koskenniemi and J. Cornelis de Vos. (Turku: Abo Akademi University, 2014),148. 44
4 Geevarghese Mar Gregorios, Oorsalem Yathra Vivaranam. (Mannar: Parumala Seminary, 1996)

5 V.Rev, Dr. N. J Thomas Ramban, Punya Nadukalil Nadathiya Oraithihasika Theerthayathra. (Kottayam: K.V.Mammen, 2002) 70.



Fr. K V Alias

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Dn. Emil T Abraham BD IV

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Joby M Varughese
BD III

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Joji Thomas John BD III

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Reuben T Mathew BD III

## Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the replication of human intelligence in devices that have been designed to behave and think like humans. The phrase can also be used to refer to any computer that demonstrates characteristics of the human intellect, like learning and problem-solving.

Artificial intelligence is founded on the idea that human intelligence can be described in a way that makes it simple for a computer to duplicate it and carry out activities of any complexity. Artificial intelligence aims to emulate cognitive pro-
cesses in humans. When it comes to concretely defining processes like learning, reasoning, and perception, researchers and developers in the field are making unexpectedly quick progress. Some people think that soon inventors might be able to create systems that are better than what humans are currently capable of learning or understanding. Others, however, continue to hold this view because all cognitive processes involve value judgments that are influenced by human experience.


Artificial intelligence has countless uses. Many different companies and sectors can use the technology. In the healthcare sector, finance, industries, and the automobile industry for self-driven cars. Machine learning (ML), a subtype of artificial intelligence, is the idea that computer programs can automatically learn from and adapt to new data without human assistance. Deep learning algorithms allow for this autonomous learning by ingesting vast quantities of
unstructured data, including text, photos, and video.

ChatGPT is one such example in the world of Artificial Intelligence released recently. This model is defined as a generative pre-trained transformer. ChatGPT is capable of producing text in the form of short stories, poems, songs, and even code. The artificial intelligence company OpenAI, headquartered in San Francisco, developed ChatGPT. It is recognized as an AI chat that has been programmed and created to carry on normal discussions and work like a normal human. This model is effective in learning to execute tasks involving natural language processing while processing massive amounts of text.

In order to teach the AI what people anticipate when they ask a question, Reinforcement Learning with Human Feedback was also used to train ChatGPT. This method of training the Large Language Model (LLM) is revolutionary since it does more than just train the LLM to an-
ticipate the next word. ChatGPT learns how to follow instructions and provide responses that are acceptable to humans using Reinforcement Learning with Human Feedback (RLHF), an additional training layer. ChatGPT has been "trained" on a significant amount of text. For instance, the GPT-3 model was trained using a text sample with more than 10 billion words and over 8 million documents.

All organizations could undergo a transformation thanks to artificial intelligence. Although the method by which this transition occurs may differ, the processes will often adhere to the road map we have provided in this book. Your company will be able to deploy and thrive in the usage of AI technology if you follow all the steps indicated in the earlier chapters. With the help of data and machines that comprehend our reality, AI holds the key to a fantastic future in which we can all make better judgments.

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ChatGPT is a powerful language model that has been trained on a wide range of text, including texts related to theology. As such, it has the potential to be a valuable tool in the theological education sector.

One potential use of ChatGPT in theological education is in the creation of educational materials. The model can be used to generate summaries, outlines, and other materials that can help students understand and engage with complex theological concepts. Additionally, the model could be used to generate discussion prompts and questions to facilitate classroom discussions.

Another potential use of ChatGPT in theological education is in the field of research. The model can be used to analyze large amounts of text, such as primary source texts, in order to identify patterns, connections, and insights. This could be particularly useful for scholars working on original research or those who are trying to gain a deeper understanding of a particular religious tradition or text.

Finally, ChatGPT could be used in the field of pastoral care. The model can be used to generate personalized responses to people's questions and concerns, which could be particularly useful in situations where a human counselor is not available.

Overall, ChatGPT has the potential to be a valuable tool in the theological education sector, but it is important to remember that it is a tool and not a replacement for human expertise and insight.












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# Unexpected Connections: A brief stay of two visiting Australians 



Rev. Ron Browning

During October last my friend Dr Anton Lucas and I visited the Old Seminary. Although it was a short overnight visit it wasnevertheless packed with learning about the seminary and the Syrian Orthodox tradition in India, as well as being occasion for good conversations with some staff and students.

Our discoveries during this time could be summarised in terms of an emphasis on worship and mission in the formation of the students. We found this emphasis in unexpected ways. Thinking about "the unexpected" in scripture I turned to Genesis chapter 18.

Under the oak trees of Mamre Abraham and Sarahwere unexpectedly visited by angels of the Lord, in order to announce to them that old Sarah will become pregnant and give birth to Isaac. The unexpected is a gift often for the people of God and it is this quality we both give thanks for in our visit to the seminary. The unexpected as given by the Holy Spirit is often for increased godly knowledge, revelation and connection.

On arrival we were greeted by Nithin, the helpful guest-master. The term guest-master suggested a monastic environment; hence I realised that the training here is somewhat monastic in terms of a daily round of prayer, worship and study. He introduced us to the deputy principal, Rev. Fr. Dr. John Thomas Karingattil, whom we learnt taught a subject called Communication.

This triggered our immediate interest. A brief conversation with him opened up the whole area of what the seminary curriculum is and how busy it is for students. Communication and Introduction to Religions,both taught in first year, present themselves as beinglargely about society and modern culture, and therefore as subjects with a clear mission focusin the four years' training. How wonderful and refreshing this is, I thought, compared to theological education in the West which is predominantly analytical and not mission focussed. Here was a kind of witness to the West!

the failing and frail, small AngloAustralian congregations with scarcely any youth or children. Where does the future lie, I mused and asked myself? Abig question.

And then, the tomb of Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios in the church was explained to us, at which I was astonished. My interest in the Eastern Church had been awakened as a young theological student. Further studies (after the UK) in the US included taking subjects at St Vladimir's Seminary New York in the

We immersed ourselves in the worship over our time there - Saturday evening to Sunday morning - this was a deep privilege. Participating with a large number of male voices in prayer and adoration, I turned to my friend and said "this is unbelievable!"- my exclamation was based on our Australian experience where we do not see such numbers of seminarians gathered in worship.

My mind went to the presence of ethnic churches in the cities of Australia from quite a few countries around the world and especially from India - large congregations that "dwarf" 1970s. At that time,I was very familiar with the little book by Mar Gregorios, then the layman, Paul Verghese - "The Joy of Freedom: Eastern Worship and Modern Man"(1967), as a very helpful introduction to the worship of the Eastern Church.Since that time,I had no idea that he had progressed to ordination and become a very special teacher and writer of the Faith, especially as principal of the seminary in which I was now standing. And here he is entombed. This was a special connection for me.

Indeed, in my early years as a priestthis little book continued to be important to me. After my own training I returned to Aus-
 tralia, was ordained into the Anglican Church and soon found myself as the Australian Secretary of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius (AnglicanOrthodox) in the 1980s. I have continued to be committed to ongoing East-West dialogue and encounter in the teaching of theology and as a parish priest.

There were the times during our stay spent with some of the students. We were interested to meet Cyril, a student from Liverpool in the U.K., and Rithin, a student from Sydney


Anglicans from Myanmar, especially their resettling in Melbourne, with the question of how the Karen youth go forwardin family, church and community in a cross-cultural environment. Dr. Anton and I were so happy to connect with the students and enjoyed their openness (a little shy at first!) in discussion.
"Connection" seems to be a keyword for this brief visit. It was a delight to have breakfast with Bishop Mar Barnabas. He presided at the Liturgy on the Sunday morning and preached a strong (bi-lingual) sermon which was based on the
in our own country of Australia- and hence to recognise the international stature of the seminary that is emerging.

We met with a group of students for discussion together and discovered their outward interest as well as being aware of their deep,spiritual engagement in worship and prayer. The topics of secularism, inter-faith and cross-cultural issues arose. Dr. Anton has been an associate professor in Indonesian studies in Adelaide and is a committed Anglican layman. He shared about his family situation: with his Indonesian wife they have two children, with their son becoming a Theravada Buddhist monk - an inter-faith family! The cross-cultural focus arose due to my ministry with (ethnic) Karen refugee
rich young man who came to Jesus. We were generously presented with some books by him at the end of the Mass. At breakfast he touched on the theme of mission, naming the big concerns facing the world at this present time of refugee displacement and the ecological crisis.

How closely it is that worship and mission intertwine as a joint topic that seemed to us to be at the centre of the seminary's life; this is expressed intimately and foremost in the intercessory uplifting of the Holy Eucharist.

We had such a rich time and now being back in Australia, our hearts turn to prayer and thanksgiving for the witness of the seminary, the staff and students, in India and beyond.




John K Thomas BD III

Mumbai..... the cradle of Indian culture and also the finance capital of India. The city where clouds may not be seen even in the daylight due to the 'enthusiastic' polluted air making the visible life more invisible. The people are very busy in their daily household chores not bothering and considering what is happening in the other side of the city. Day or night, the stations are overcrowded but not even a happy face to be seen either 'headset' men or a 'red-lip' women. The street vendors are begging or bargaining for their life to go on. People like us help them to reach their destiny. They may be whispering like this, "We will not bargain any more with malayalis". The slum life is a pathetic sight to witness, but the 'fragile' male group is busy moving with 'panparags' in their hands and masks in their faces. The women are not allowed to learn and the children are wandering in the streets with no hesitation of the future or not even the present. The Marine drive or better known as Queens necklace presents another view of the city. The sea shore creates an atmosphere for young couples to make their future plans in 'silence'. Yet the 'silence' is taking them out of the world for hours and hours. Amazingly, no one disturbs their 'silence' and such is the expression of freedom.

Yet some places really instilled the mind with serene thoughts and helped to derive powerful insights. The Navjeevan centre, as the name itself suggests, brings new life to the world and new vision to the people who visits it. An authorised and well-disciplined institution where the

children of the 'red-light' area are brought up and looked after. The children, eventhough they are the products of some unidentified realities, looks graceful and charming.

The Gregorian Community Centre at Roha, I think, is the most peaceful place to live on this earth. The presence and leadership of Fr. Philip Kuruvila, aged 72 and still the 'youth facilitator', and Fr. Jobin, the quiet, motivating priest makes it a worthy place. The riverside prayer, the ecofriendly class, meditation and worship in the mountain top, and finally the camp fire- every-
thing was an eye-opener and ignited the heart with thought provoking realisations. The people in the churches are very hospitable, the care given by them are really appreciable.

Coorilos Thirumeni, undoubtedly I can say, is a visionary. He is making the future of the country and the Malankara Orthodox Church reach an esteemed position by inspiring every single soul who comes to Him. It's the end note, 'if you get a chance to visit Bombay, I can say, it's a place to explore much'because its the city that never sleeps!!! "



Bristo Babu BD III








































































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Basil Joy BD III





























































































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Sijo T Joseph
BD III





















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" Sometimes you have to travel a long way to find what is near."


Cyril B John
BD I

## Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity : A Reflection

The theme "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity" is directly inspired by 2 Corinthians 5:14 and draws on the very heart of the gospel that offers to the world the depths and wonder of the love of God the Holy Trinity. It is rooted in God's design for the unity and reconciliation of all, a design made visible in the incarnation of the love of God in Jesus Christ. For Paul, who wrote to the Christians in Corinth, Jesus Christ is not simply a Galilean teacher or the founder of a new and exclusive religion, but the cosmic and universal Christ, in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9). Out of love for us and for the whole of creation, God became flesh, assumed all the suffering and passion of humankind and of the whole created order to heal us, restore us, save us, and reconcile us with God. Our faith proclaims that "God is love" (1 John 4:16) and that, in Jesus Christ, this very love of God has been revealed to the world. As the eternal Word became flesh in Jesus Christ, so we are called to be "in Christ" and to dwell with Christ in the love of the one, holy, and eter-
nal God. The church, as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), receives, lives in, witnesses to, and shares that love with others so that peace, justice, and unity may be poured out in all the places where the children of God now cry out from their suffering and from places of injustice and violence.

The theme of any assembly sets a frame around the gathering of the fellowship and offers a picture of our life and journey together, setting the direction for future travel. It becomes an effective way for the churches to see anew their common call to seek the communion (koinonia) that is God's gift and promise, to shape their service (diakonia) to the people of the world and to creation, to commit themselves to God's mission of love to the world (missio Dei), and to give words to their common prayer for each other and for the whole world (leiturgia). The theme set for the 2022 assembly in Karlsruhe reminds us that the church, as the body of Christ, is moved by Christ himself - whose love for the world, which was the very love of God, was so deep that he gave himself up even to death for its sake. As we are

moved by what is revealed and given through Christ's love, so we are given the gift of loving Christ and, through him, all that God has made. Being "in Christ," we are not simply inspired to love but blessed with the gift of love. In 2 Corinthians, Paul tells the early church that "the love of Christ urges us on." Gospel texts and many passages in the whole of the New Testament many of them to be studied throughout the assembly - show us how the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ was first witnessed and interpreted by the early church. A key text is Matthew 9:3536 , which describes what Christ's love, revealed and exercised in his ministry, looked like. We read thatJesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. We see in this text the Christ who is moved by compassion, moved profoundly "in his guts," the one who brings good news, heal-
ing, and hope to those who are "harassed and helpless." His love is not only for his immediate disciples, but much more widely for the crowds, for those in all the cities and villages who had gathered in the wilderness to listen to his teaching, and for all those whom God has made. This love is not only the love of an inspiring human being but is the love of God revealed in and through him. Thisdivine love is expansive, deep, bringing practical and life-transforming hope. It is this kind of love, the love of the one in whom God is made present in the world in all its woundedness and brokenness, that moves both church and world. The assembly will provide an opportunity to reflect profoundly on the meaning of Christ's love - and to find ourselves, and the love we both receive and offer, renewed and reimagined through Christ's loving gaze. We will discover together how love is not (as it is so often framed) simply a sentimental or romantic feeling but may be a participation in the love of God revealed in Christ: love that is redemptive, selfdenying, and sacrificial, as well as practical

and active in bringing change for the good.

## God's Love

But in times like these, as those who are in Christ, we are never without hope, even as we are faced with such great challenges. Indeed, we have such gifts and blessings from God that we know we do not struggle alone and that we do not have only our own resources to rely on. God is working in the world and within God's people in the church. The WCC Faith and Order text The Church: Towards a Common Vision, in its final chapter, reminds us that

The first and foremost attitude of God towards the world is love, for every child, woman and man who has ever become part of human history, and, indeed, for the whole of creation. ${ }^{1}$

This "foremost attitude of God" is made flesh in Jesus Christ: in the compassion he lived in his earthly ministry; in the mystery of his incarnation; in his suffering, dying, and being raised again to new life; and in the promise of the future renewal of all creation. And this love, the love
with which he loved and the love he makes possible in us, is the gift of God to the church and to the world. It is this love which inspires, moves, and creates all that is possible in the life of the church as it becomes a sign of God's love for the world. The theme of the assembly does not explicitly mention the church and leaves openjust how the love of Christ might be made manifest so that the world might be moved. The church may need to have a certain modesty, since not all its people and in every way always make visible the profundity of the love of God. But the church may rejoice that, in God's design, it is a new creation, sign, and servant of the mission of God to the world, and this mission is rooted always in love, expressed and founded in the faith proclaimed by the apostles.

The life of the church, in its worship and service to the world, is called to be a sign of the love revealed in Christ and lived out by the apostles through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the love that can move the world to reconciliation and unity. The unity of the church, as witness to rec-
onciliation, is also always to be identified with and connected to its service in and for the transformation of the world. An earlier WCC text, Church and World, expressed it like this:

In offering its common life in the service of God and God's love for the world, the church has also constantly to struggle both through its presence alongside those who suffer and by its action on their behalf. In this sharing of God's love the church enables them to perceive the suffering love of God in Jesus Christ for them, and the church itself is led to a deeper experience of that love. ${ }^{2}$

It is this love that inspires those who follow Christ to draw closer to one another in the unity that is God's gift. Loveinspires communion and love draws us to one another. Christ himself, for love of Jerusalem, cried out, "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings!" (Luke 13:34) Love, more than ideas and ideals, gathers, inspires, and creates unity. The church is a sign of this sacrificial love of Christ in the world, and the people of the church are servants of the gospel so that, through their love, both in attitude and practice, they may inspire those beyond the walls of the church. This witness does not come from human effort alone and is not founded on a romantic and naive notion of human aspiration but is made possible by the love of Christ working in us. Christ, out of love, prayed for the unity of his friends and disciples (John 17). He prayed "that they may be completely one," not only for their own sake but also so that the world might believe. What the church is to be and what the church ought to do are two sides of the same coin. The church is one, according to the scriptures and the apostolic faith, and is also called to be a sign of unity for a broken world.

From the heart of the loving Christ comes the prayer for unity. In Christian worship, the eucharist conveys the reality of the love of God made known in Christ through the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection. It is this love that moves Christ's followers to love not only one another, but also the world for which he died. Christ moves his people to love the world that he loved
and to become a sign of the healing, reconciliation, and unity for which a broken world cries out. The witness of the apostles is that Christ breaks down all the familiar markers of difference and division. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28) The church witnesses to the love of the triune God who loves, who is loved, and who is love. The church shares in the unity at the heart of God and offers itself as an eschatological sign and servant of the promised unity of God's fulfilled and glorified creation. The unity we seek is therefore not simplya kind of common project based on shared aspirations, but is founded in the love of God that draws us together and unites us. It is a cause for lament that our present disunity, our lack of love for one another, and our own need to be reconciled make us, in the church, sometimes a poor sign and servant of the Christ who calls us to be one, but this is the challenge before the church, and the promise and hope too. When churches find unity, they do so not only as witnesses to the world, but as part of the world that God has made. Already, within the church itself, the world is being gathered into unity. As Church and World puts it,

What is gathered, reconciled and renewed in the church is, in fact, "world" in its estrangement from God and therefore this renewing process continually refers back to the world and forward in its final redemption.

Christ's love, even as it brings unity in the church, is moving the world to reconciliation and unity

The ecumenical movement has always been about the churches calling one another to visible unity, to full communion. Today, when because of a pandemic even meeting in person has become so difficult, that vocation is all the more needed. The churches need now, together, in a renewed ecumenical movement for the sake of the world, to find a more public voice to speak a truer hope than the empty optimism of any faded political rhetoric: a hope that might build a bet-

ter world than the one so deeply shaped by materialism, individualism, and consumerism, a world in which resources will be shared, inequalities addressed, and a new dignity found among us and for all of us. Churches that live and pray only in hidden, private communities, separated from one another, are called by the risen Christ to be "sent" into the very public and open spaces of the world, to reframe our corporate sense of what matters, to make idols fall, and to be part of welcoming the kingdom of God in which the poor are blessed and the captives set free. A world crying out for profound love, for community, for justice and hope needs churches that are visibly in communion, longing for oneness where there is division and finding a new future for humankind and for all creation, as expressed in Revelation 21. Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity. The theme of the 11th Assem-
bly is a song of praise for the God whose love, in Christ, moves us. It is a statement of belief and trust that it is the will of God to move us by love to reconciliation and unity. It is a message to the world about the love that is the heart of the Christian faith. It is an invitation to the churches and to all people of goodwill across the world to share in the common wisdom of love to move us all to be reconciled and to find our true unity as humankind.

## Footnotes

1 The Church: Towards a Common Vision, Faith and Order Paper 214, §58 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), https://archive.org/ details/ wccfops2.221/page/32/mode/2up.
2 Church and World, Faith and Order Paper 151, §38 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), https:/ /archive.org/details/wccfops2.158/page/32/ mode/2up.


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## Dn. Rijosh G. George <br> BD IV


























#### Abstract

   

















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 พంகவிన్షృ








# SPECTACLE OF FREEDOM 



Dn. Jithin Alex BD IV

Tlhere is a saying, "life's not a movie". But now, in the new normal times, films are adapting real life stories and sociopolitical issues so that it can make differences in lives of people. The influence of films on a community is higher than we can imagine. Films are addressing important issues in personal as well as social life. Films have the ability to change lives. With stories that open up others' experiences and characters who navigate the forces that we also face in our own lives, the right film at the right time can be transformative. Films can help teach tough lessons which an individual may not have learned otherwise. Each genre has different effects which makes us laugh, change perspectives etc. Films can reflect society and transform opinions.

On taking a close look on some South Indian films, they have an essence of silent revolution. They play a critical role in instilling a sense of awareness in society. They have taken storylines from real life incidents and has portrayed it in a very sensible manner. These have a crystal clear intention of conveying such topics into the community. A film can create lot of impact in a society. The incidents happening around the world and in our community is always reported in newspapers and seen in channels, but it has lesser effect due to poor reading habits as well as lack of interest in news channels. Films on the other hand, is a form of entertainment and hence people look into it closely. The films that has a fire of protest against the so called Social Freedom is looked into.

It's been 75 years since India got its Independence. Every year we remember all freedom fighters with a lot of gratitude for making India free from the British rule. But the important thing that we should be thinking as individuals is; ' is there real freedom? Are individuals enjoying complete freedom? Every individual is chained in some or the other way by a social construct. Many examples can be quoted in for this small statement, nothing can be stated as a special case. From the level of a small child to death bed individuals are chained on the basis of several aspects, like caste, society, gender,
colour, rich, poor etc. Humans are slaves of the society. Only privileged ones can enjoy freedom. The constitutional freedom allows everyone, the freedom of speech and expression, movement, land rights, gatherings and personal liberty. After all those debates, conversations, written statements about equality, freedom and all we should think about who is really enjoying the freedom. How many of us are aware of the restricted freedom in and around in our personal lives as well as in a community? How many talk about the same? How awareness can be provided to a group of people who doesn't even bother about such social issues that should be addressed immediately? South Indian films provide answers for all these questions. Films have changed frame to more of naturalistic themes than of fiction. Hence it's relatable and can change human perspectives towards social and political issues.

Some South Indian movies has portrayed their ideas on freedom- The false freedom or the forged freedom. A South Indian film director, Jeo Baby, from Kerala spoke about his revolution through films, "The Great Indian Kitchen" talking about enslavery of woman in patriarchy and "Freedom Fight" which is an anthology- a series of 5 short films talking about different levels of freedom fights.Depending on who you are asking, freedom can imply a variety of things. Everything from their immediate problems, to their social and economic circumstances, to their level of knowledge and exposure, would determine the answer. The freedom that is restricted in each levels of life and in different occasions, systems etc. is discussed in the film.

The situation to which all people can relate is the segment called Old Age Home, Aretired man named Baby, yearns for sweet foods despite having diabetes and a steadily failing memory. On the other hand, now that their children are grown and settled in their lives, his wife Lali, has finally found the time to do the things she always

wanted, especially running a small home-based business. Due to the expectations of others around them, including each other, the couple finds it difficult to fulfil their seemingly basic wishes. The troubled housekeeper Dhanu which is also an old lady, seemed to comprehend both situations better and she is also prohibited from having the freedom to make her own decisions. In this little story, the freedom fight that is still existing even in the old age is portrayed.

Like the above mentioned story which happens for real in most houses, all the 5 stories convey ideas of still existing freedom fights. This story is a very basic example of forged freedom. The difference in freedom and discrimination according to economy, class, power etc. The so called society has stereotyped freedom on certain aspects for certain set of people; the privileged onesthe ones with power and money etc. Society decides and implements justice without any equality. As a social being humans are always dependent on the society in some or the other way. Humans are forced to move along the waves. Only a few has the courage to swim across and create a change. The segment 'Geethu Unchained' explains the restriction of freedom faced by a girl to choose her life partner. Jithin Isacc Thomas' 'Prathumu' digs into a topic that is hardly discussed in the open. The story tells what a youth had to undergo when he repelled the most excruciating experience at work at a

minister's house. The brutal and injust behaviour by the so called high class men are portrayed.

A film in which Jayasurya played a role of Transwoman, talks about the equality and right LGBTQI + that is to be given to community in education and jobs. The film is named, 'Njan Marykutty'. It provides awareness about gender issues and rights to the community and hence a change in the perspective. Tamil film Super Deluxe also addresses the issues faced by the community.

Paava Kadhaigal an anthology portrays the restriction of freedom in choosing partners were the hindrance is based on caste, creed and gender.

Socio-political Tamil movies like Jai Bhim and Karnan portrays the injustice suffered by the marginalized ones. Both films received both critical praise and economic success as they expose the systemic injustices and cruelties that the people in Tamil Nadu that the caste-marginalized ones are exposed to. The films' common themescaste discrimination, police violence, and systematic injustice - are based on true events. Jai Bhim the film is inspired by the true incident that happened way back in 1993. The custodial death of Rajakunnu from Irular community was portrayed through the film. Karnan is a story similar to an incident that happened in 1995 in a village called Kodiyankulam. The story revolves around the village where no bus stop was there and people struggle a lot and go to another village to take a bus.

Boban), revealing his helplessness. The story is about a callous system that ruthlessly eats the people that keep it going. Three police officers are falsely accused in an event during a political contest and forced to leave to avoid being apprehended. According to the Netflix synopsis, it quotes, "Three police officers become pawns for unscrupulous lawmakers when they are framed in an incident amid political elections and must flee to evade arrest." A satirical and humour filled approach of the film Nna Thaan Case Kodu highlights the issues faced by common man and his freedom of expression. The issue addresses the suffering of common man due to potholes in the road which are unattended.

Whereas in Jana Gana Mana, through a wellknit story, it demonstrates the exact issue with the police breaking the law in this way, how we've all been socialised to make snap judgments about people based solely on the way they dress or look, the misguided public support for such executions, and why they shouldn't be celebrated. Police vigilantism has long been a strategy used by political parties to play on people's emotions and win votes. Many incidents that happened in India has been mentioned in the same film like, Vidya's story in Jana Gana Mana is sure to reminder of Rohith Vemula. He was a 26-year-old Dalit PhD student at Hyderabad Central University. He killed himself in 2016 as he was treated like an outcast. In the letter he wrote before he took his own life, he said, "My birth is my fatal accident."

In this film, the incident of Madhu who has been killed for stealing food was also mentioned. Tribal welfare activist Dhanya Raman said that

Madhu was mentally ill. In a Facebook post, she demanded that the CM and DGP visit the spot. In a Facebook post, Manila C Mohan, a journalist with Mathrubhumi weekly says: "Those who don't have power won't understand the powerless, they won't understand that the powerless have the right to live. They aren't guilty, but they have the silent pleasure of conducting a murder."

The risk of life through Freedom of expression is explained by Director Indhu V.S's first feature film is titled 19(1) (a). 19(1) (a) is the article in the Indian Constitution that guarantees freedom of speech and expression. And Indhu's intimate film attempts to take stock of the condition of freedom of expression in the country. Nithya Menen plays the protagonist. Her character doesn't have a name in the movie. She is standing in for an entire section of women in society who have been conditioned to just do what they are told. And Gauri is the exact opposite of the protagonist.He's naturally inclined to swim against the tide. He's a rebel, a writer and an activist. Even when he finds out there is a threat to his life due to the way he goes about living it, he refuses to change his stance. Sidheeq Kappan was arrested in 2020, charging UAPA, on his way to report the story of 19 year old Dalit woman who was gang raped. Before his imprisonment, Kappan was a regular contributor to the news portal Azhimukham. He was imprisoned in jail for nearly two years, was granted bail today by the Supreme Court, which said "Every person has freedom of expression." The Hathras case drew massive outrage and protests over allegations that the state administration and the police were involved in a cover-up.



The young woman died days after she was gangraped. Later, the UP police cremated her in the dead of night, in the absence of her family. Siddique Kappan is in custody due to his affiliation with a particular religion and his reporting on restrictions on that religion. Journalist and human rights advocate Siddique Kappan has written extensively about the discrimination of religious and caste minorities in India.

In 'Varthamanam' a movie by Siddarth Sivan, Faiza Sufiya (Parvathy Thiruvothu) the grand-daughter of a prominent freedom fighter, has come to a Delhi based campus for her doctorate. But her secular ideals are constantly in conflict with the facist political temperament prevailing in the university. The movie quotes issues of Rohit Vemula, Kalburgi, Gouri Lankesh and many other victims of the fascist forces. It questions our silent compliance.

Moral policing has been observed widely in Kerala and the issues are being reported widely. A group of students reportedly underwent moral policing on Friday, July 22, at a bus stop in the Palakkad district. The students, who were a mix of boys and girls attending the Karimba Government Higher Secondary School, were attacked by a group of about 10 to 12 people for sitting close to one another. .After the students responded that they had every right to do the same. Then the mob started attacking the women first and hurling insults at them as they were attacked. Boys who promptly intervened were also thrashed. Another incident occurred at

Vellanikkalpara, a popular tourist spot near Pothencode, on September 4. The students - four girls and two boys - were on a visit to the scenic location when they were stopped and verbally abused by a group of men, reportedly local residents. Ishq is about how the heroine responds to moral policing and to an extent, toxic masculinity." Cartoon has been scripted by Lazer Shine and Ratheesh Ravi in 2012. The movie is said to have the theme which concentrates on the theme of moral policing.

The community or the society should understand and should be aware about the incidents happening in the society. This is a necessity in today's world. The perspectives of individuals should change accordingly. The young minds should be thinking about how to make the world better in such situations. Movies has a greater impact and it reflects in the society. As in the Holy Bible, Christ Jesus said, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free, (St John 8:32). A normal saying is, an individual requires Food, Water and Shelter to live in this world. But to correct the statement, humans should have the freedom to live their lives peacefully, according to their wishes in a way that it does not affect another individual's life in a bad way.

1 Peter 2:16-17 says, Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, and honour the emperor.

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Aby Benson BD III


























































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Prijin Pappachan （1st．Sem．Prefect）


Gregory Roy （3rd Year Class Reesh）


Fr．Iyoob OIC
（1st Year Class Reesh）


Nidhin Kurian M
（Sreyas First Floor Reesh）


Sijo T Joseph
（2nd．Sem．Prefect）


Mathew P Thomas （2nd Year Class Reesh）


Mammen Joseph （Sreyas Ground Floor Reesh）


Shaji Ulahannan Kurian （Sreyas Second Floor Reesh）

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Mrs. Annie Susan Mess Supervisor



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Thumpamon Diocese
Stewardship Ist Semester


Dn. Jestin Jose Mavelikkara Diocese Stewardship Ind Semester


Dn. Rony R John
Kottarakara-Punalur Diocese Sports Secretary


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Dn. Jjjo K Joy
Mavelikkara Diocese Volleyball Captain


Dn. Kurian Mathew
Madras Diocese
Seminary Doctor


Dn. Jithin Jose
Chengannur Diocese Divyabodhanam ||ld ${ }^{\text {ded }}$ Semester


Dn. Amal V Mathew
Kottayam Diocese Stage \& Decoration


Melvin Rajan K Bangalore Diocese Ecumenical Relations


Dn. Joby Joseph George Nilackal Diocese Maintenance


Dn. Glory Mathew George
Adoor-Kadampanad Diocese
Choir Leader \&
Audio - Visual IInd Semester


Dn. Sanju P Mathew
Mavelikkara Diocese Darpanam


Dn. Lijo Lawrance
Bangalore Diocese
Guest Master \& Task Force
${ }^{\text {sts}}$ Semester


Dn. Renny Rajan
Thumpamon Diocese
Task Force IInd ${ }^{\text {d }}$ Semester


Dn. Gibin George
Kottarakara-Punalur Diocese Electrician \& Library In ${ }^{\text {di }}$ Semester


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Dn. Sibi Sebastian Thumpamon Diocese Theological Association \& Library ${ }^{\text {st }}$ Semester


Dn. Githin Cherian John Niranam Diocese Aquarium \& Aquaguard


Dn. Sanjay Alias Joy Kochi Diocese Seminary Chronicle


Dn. Robin K Mathew
Chengannur Diocese
Garden In ${ }^{\text {nd }}$ Semester

## OUTGOING STUDENIS 2019-2023



Dn. Rjjosh G George
Thumpamon Diocese
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Dn. Abilda Mathew Malabar Diocese Sanitation Master


Dn. Akhil Johnson Kollam Diocese Sacrist IInd Semester


Dn. Ajin Chacko M
Kunnamkulam Diocese Museum


Dn. Jithin Alex
Niranam Diocese
Post Master \& Kitchen
Garden ${ }^{\text {ts }}$ Semester


Dn. Aaron Joshua John Delhi Diocese
Reesh ${ }^{\text {st }}$ Semester \& Mar Gregorios Foundation


Dn. Sjuu Thomas Nilackal Diocese Auditor


Dn. Jinu Mathew Johnson Kollam Diocese Computer Lab |st Semester


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Arts Club Secretary \&
Photography


Dn. Alan K Varghese
Kottayam Central Diocese Parish Mission Coordinator


Dn. Robin K Jacob Kandanad West Diocese Mutual Assistance ${ }^{\text {st}}$ Semester


Dn. Dennis Reji
Kottayam Diocese Alumni Association \&

Computer Lab IInd Semester


Dn. Ribin R Baby
Adoor-Kadampanad Diocese
Sacrist ${ }^{\text {st }}$ Semester
\& Reesh IInd Semester


Dn. Basil Babu
Sleeba Dasa Samooham Swanthanam


Dn. Rinu Prince Kunnamkulam Diocese Divyabodhanam ${ }^{\text {st }}$ Semester \& Audio - Visual ${ }^{\text {st }}$ Semester


Dn. Ebin Eldho
Angamaly Diocese PRO \& Kitchen Garden IInd Semester

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[^0]:    Dn. K Smijai Simon Madras Diocese
    Social Media \& Garden ${ }^{\text {st }}$ Semester

